

Minutes

Trinity Management Council

Trinity County Library Conference Room, Weaverville, CA

Thursday, May 26, 2011

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Start of meeting 10:45 AM

Attending Members:

Brian Person	Bureau of Reclamation, Chair
Nancy Finley	Fish and Wildlife Service, Vice-Chair
Curtis Milliron	California Natural Resources Agency
David Hillemeier	Yurok Tribe
Mike Orcutt	Hoopa Valley Tribe
Seth Naman	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Fisheries
Judy Pflueger	Trinity County Board of Supervisors
Bill Brock	Forest Service
Arnold Whitridge	Trinity Adaptive Management Work Group
Robin Schrock	Trinity River Restoration Program, Executive Director

Others who attended: Jennifer Faler, Ernie Clark, Rod Wittler, Andreas Krause, Nina Hemphill, Diana Clifton, DJ Bandrowski, TRRP; George Kautsky, Audrey Hilton, Hoopa Valley Tribe; Tim Hayden, Yurok Tribe; Don Reck, USBR; Teresa Connor, DWR; Travis Michel, TRGA; Kelli Gant, TLRA/TAMWG; Joe Polos, FWS; Alex Cousins, TCRCD

Regular Business:

Introductions

Brian Person, chair, opened the Trinity Management Council (TMC) meeting. Person welcomed those in attendance, introduced new TRRP Executive Director Robin Schrock, and asked Council members and members of the audience to introduce themselves.

Approval of Agenda

Agenda accepted as presented

Approval of April 2011 Minutes

Consideration of approval of minutes moved to next meeting to permit Council time to review them. Person requested correction in wording on status of federal budget and in spelling of councilmember's name.

Open Forum

Person welcomed public audience to address Council. No public comments at this time.

Report from Trinity Adaptive Management Working Group Chair

Arnold Whitridge spoke of the passing of Byron Leydecker and how greatly he is missed. While members share a range of opinions, TAMWG recommends approval of the TRRP 2012 budget as presented to the Group on May 17. TAMWG also urges tight adherence, in both the adopted budget and in actual expenditures, to the 20:30:50 ratio of allocations for administration, science activities and implementation activities, respectively. Group members seem pleased with the science work-plan development process for 2012. Some are worried about funding line affecting project prioritization. It will be appropriate to revisit project prioritization once the funding line is finalized.

Whitridge noted TAMWG has no formal opinion of how high the holding capacity of the river should be, yet, in the interest of public relations, credence needs to be given to the Trinity River Guide Association concerns and its urging for assessment of adult holding conditions. TAMWG considers it important a statement be made available to the public explaining Program scientists' perspective(s) on the issue and providing a rationale for how that project fits in the prioritization.

Whitridge noted there has never been a joint meeting of TMC and TAMWG. The one being planned would be the first. As such, it would be worthwhile to invest one or two hours on extended introductions to learn about each person and about organizational goals so all can know where organizations are headed. TAMWG wants to open a new chapter of better communication. More transparency will enable people to see how and why decisions are made. The meeting should be retrospective only insofar as to help determine where we go now, he explained. Discussion topics are needed for the Federal Register notice of the meeting.

Whitridge commented he was drawn to a report about Platt River restoration being guided by a few big questions, front and center. We don't do that, he observed. It would be helpful for the public; it would be helpful to narrow projects. TAMWG would be very interested in helping develop those big questions.

Report from Trinity Management Council Chair

Brian Person attended the most recent meeting of TAMWG after first sending out the "mega-letter." The Group seemed appreciative of the reply. Person noted Byron Leydecker had been a huge contributor to the Program, especially in that he was critical. Person proffered the idea of naming a side channel or some other appropriate spot to commemorate Leydecker's efforts on behalf of the river.

Person spoke on the depth of experience and abilities Robin Schrock brings to TRRP and expressed gratitude to Jennifer Faler for a job well done as TRRP interim executive director.

Person discussed the preferred alternative for the Lewiston Dam power plant upgrade, including installation of larger generators to utilize the increased flow regime; potential power increase: 222 Megawatts versus 345 Kilowatts; potential fisheries benefit; draw from left side under temperature curtain and attract returning fish to the hatchery side. Right training wall under water needs to be raised: new and improved fish barrier. An

MOU with TPUD will fund design and construction of the plant, which will be owned by BOR. The additional power generated may be marketed by TPUD, most likely to the City of Redding.

Person said he has drafted a letter to the Regional Director reminding the issue of hatchery management has not been answered and a response would be helpful. Whitridge commented recommendations would be welcome regarding configuration of the expiration of members' terms.

Trinity Alps Resort is the likely venue for the joint meeting, set for 9:30 to 4:00 June 29. Person and Whitridge can facilitate. Whitridge read a list of suggested topics from the proposed agenda. 1.) Review of correspondence; Discussion of Working Group's participation — what's working, what not; 2.) Discussion of TMC/TAMWG relationship: what is desired progress; how do we get there; Communication; TMC responsiveness; How do we get better public understanding; How can the Program better capitalize on the TAMWG; 3.) Next steps;

Person urged recirculating the draft agenda via email to all TAMWG and TMC members. Orcutt and Finley concurred on the notion of sharing topic proposals in advance.

Report from Past Acting Executive Director

Jennifer Faler noted new Executive Director Robin Schrock is a quick study. Faler thanked all for the experience and support she received this past year as interim executive director. Her official position now is Implementation Branch Chief. Since the last TMC meeting the Program has focused almost entirely on the 2011 high flow releases, resulting in successful high flow release of 11,000 cfs.

There has been minimal progress on Phase I review and Phase 2 planning, which will be the primary focus during the next two months. Wheel Gulch will move forward this summer while planning and design on Upper Junction City, Lower Steiner Flat and Hocker Flat proceed next year.

The 2012 program budget is essentially finalized but subject to change based on final 2012 Budget amounts. The number and duration of the 2011 continuing resolutions precluded several 2011 projects from being implemented. Funds are available to pre-fund some 2012 activities, with recommendations to fund: outmigrant monitoring (using screw-traps); geomorphic assessment (part of Phase 2); wildlife monitoring; large wood and gravel supply.

The Program is in negotiations with two Tribes about pre-funding some projects.

Orcutt noted he is aware of more front-loading than in previous years; no explanation of what original impediment was.

Information / Decision Items:**TMC Officer Elections**

Person provided a brief review of bylaws governing terms and election of officers, the concept of the chair and vice-chair swapping one-year terms in each seat. He asked for expressions of interest from council members in the chair and vice-chair positions. No other members expressed interest in the positions. Persons and Finley will continue in their present offices as chair and vice-chair respectively, until January 2012.

Dates and formats of remaining 2011 meetings were discussed:

June 16, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., TMC conference call;
June 29, 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Joint TAMWG/TMC meeting, Trinity Alps Resort
July 21, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., TMC conference call;
August 18, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., TMC conference call;
September 21-22, 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Klamath Estuary
October 20, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., TMC conference call;
November 17, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., TMC conference call;
December 14-15, 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., USFS Redding

High Flow Release Observations

Andreas Krause gave a presentation with slides on high flow release observations and noted there was conflicting data between dam flow-measurement instrumentation versus real-time gauge reading. It may be an issue of calibration and a meeting is slated for next week with USGS to resolve the conflict in data.

Krause discussed high-flow gravel augmentation at Lewiston weir (2,000 cubic yards planned, 3,000 injected) and Lowden Meadows (3,000 planned, 2,000 injected).

There were no impacts to human health and safety; no injuries and no emergency service calls. There was no inundation of major infrastructures although it did put water in close proximity to six homes built in the floodplain since 2006. Water flowed very near two of those homes in Poker Bar but had no direct impact. The access road to one property was slightly inundated. Minor subsidence in Indian Creek has been reported since beginning of ROD releases. Restoration work has altered flood elevation when compared to 10,000 cfs high-flow release in 2006. With this 11,000cfs release it was lower by 1.5 feet in some places and reported, but not verified, to be 11 inches higher at Bucktail Bridge. Bucktail levee, extending upstream from bridge, experienced some erosion but the replaced culvert performed admirably. Bucktail Access experienced inundation. Poker Bar Bridge-left experienced minimal erosion. Treadwell Bridge, newly replaced Salt Flat Bridge handled the high flows well.

Landowner issues included some confusion and concern. Five lost water supply; four experienced significant erosion and there was significant bank loss at upper Junction City. Loss of fruit trees/gardens and accumulation of debris were reported.

Krause reported there was good wood racking resulting from much wood in the river. One owner expressed concern about large woody debris high flows deposited on property. Hillemeier pointed out the Program has no legal obligation to remove it; there is no liability to TRRP.

Program received a lot of phone calls about the high flows and all were responded to within an hour. Outreach paid off. Most outreach had been on upper 40 miles; more outreach would have been beneficial to residents below North Fork, plus better notification language.

Krause noted flows are still too high to conduct assessments; summer will be monitoring time so expect results next winter.

High flows flushed a lot of sand, one of the management objectives. A lot deposited on floodplain surfaces, which is good, but also filled in one scour outlet. Inbrication indicated rocks were also moving. Krause reviewed a variety of effects of high flows on constructed islands, new channels, forced meanders and constructed logjams and noted the full effects were difficult to assess while water is still high. He showed a time-lapse photographic sequence of the high flow release rise and visible effects occurring at one site over a span of days.

Person commended TRRP staff for their work related to the high-flow release.

Brock inquired if additional bank erosion can be expected. Krause indicated it was hard to tell; Faler responded the river has more work to do – it will over-broaden then constrict back. Pflueger asked about any damage leading to claims. Clifton stated there was no infrastructure damage. Pflueger asked if there were any changes in flood plains that would affect FEMA maps and where homes should not be built. Krause replied if there were it would be very minimal. Bandrowski noted flows were lower in areas where rehab has been done. Faler noted there were six new homes built in the floodplain and the county was supposed to communicate with TRRP on such construction, yet only did on one of those homes. Faler and Pflueger agreed to meet to discuss ensuring communication and consultation takes place.

Orcutt asked if higher flows from tributaries would be factored into high-flow releases during wet years and expressed concern about making that assessment with regards to risk to structures. Faler noted there is one house down river entirely in the floodplain that could be inundated. She addressed the likelihood of a 100-year event during an 11,000cfs release. The Program learned about potential erosion that could affect bridges. The river is changing and won't be the same in any two years, so it's a judgment call.

Millman asked about any plans for release cycles that were lower, with a longer descending arm and timed with riparian area readiness (cottonwood seed cycle) — something that reflects a more natural hydrologic cycle. Krause indicated the Program has that flexibility on timing and objectives. Naman noted 11,000cfs with a short limb is within the realm of naturalness. Millman added that smaller, additional peaks might be considered. Hillemeier concurred it should be considered.

Krause noted cooler weather conditions late in the season this year affected riparian readiness and reproduction timing of cottonwoods and other riparian plants during high-flow release.

Orcutt asked about fish strandings as high flows receded. Hemphill and Clifton responded there were observations of steelhead and Coho in spots still connected to the river. The water is still cold so there is time to relocate fish as reports come in.

Lunch Break

Information / Decision Items:

Temperature Plan of Action

Rod Wittler made a presentation on temperature plan of action. Constraints on temperature adjustment include restoration/study flows, river temperatures and dam safety restrictions. Order WR 90-5 stipulates the Trinity River Division shall not be operated for temperature control on the Sacramento River in a manner that adversely affects salmonid spawning and egg incubation in the Trinity River. Adverse effects are deemed to occur when average daily water temperature exceeds 56° F at the Douglas City Bridge between September 15 and October 1, or at the confluence of the North Fork Trinity between October 1 and December 31 due to controllable factors and a result of modification of Trinity River operations for temperature control on the Sacramento River.

Wittler showed temperature objectives for specific time-spans on target reaches, with variations for the Lewiston to Weitchpec reach premised on water-year type. He then reviewed the annual water temperature forecast process: DWR provides updated inflow forecasts based on snow water content and precipitation; CVO updates its allocation plan including Carr diversions and Trinity River releases; TRRP provides flow schedule alternatives; CVO models Trinity and Lewiston reservoir temperatures; TRRP models Trinity River temperatures. Snow water content is 109% of April 1 average and Trinity Reservoir, with a capacity of 2.4 million acre-feet is at 2.2 million acre-feet, 110% of its 15-year average. Accumulated inflow to Trinity Reservoir is at 105% of 15-year average. Accumulated precipitation at Trinity Fish Hatchery is 112% of average for water-year to-date. Trinity Reservoir storage at end of October 2011 is projected to be above 2 million acre-feet.

Wittler discussed operational options: River flow schedule; exports flow schedule; auxiliary outlet works; Lewiston modifications – appraisal study; modify carryover targets; other options for consideration. He shared a chart graphing Trinity River target temperature exceedances for April 1 through September 30, 2009 correlated to discharge flow rates from Trinity Dam powerhouse. Wittler then showed a graphic of Trinity Dam Outlet Works and noted it is a complex system but it provides many options. He followed with a chart of Trinity River mean daily water temperature fluctuations in 2008 and 2009 their correlation to water releases from the auxiliary outlet. He explained the Sacramento River Temperature Task Group meets monthly or as often as required during late spring, summer and early fall. The group monitors temperature in Trinity and Sacramento rivers affected by CVP operations and serves as a forum for notification of operations, limitation, constraints and performance issues. Wittler shared a chart showing how performance measures for the target temperature at Douglas City are formulated and graphed, then a chart depicting sensitivity measures correlating downriver target temperature to reservoir volume. He noted downriver target temperatures have not been correlated yet to reservoir temperature.

Wittler stated it would be hard to meet target temperatures in another drought and asked how we adapt adaptive management to position for the next drought. He quoted Mark Twain, “Good judgment comes from experience, and a lot of that comes from bad judgment.” The real question, Wittler said, is, if we take action, as required by regulatory agency, what is the outcome and what are we going to do if that doesn’t happen or isn’t satisfactory?

Whitridge asked Wittler when we might know more about the Lewiston Appraisal Study results. Wittler noted there were several aspects to explore and the Temperature Task Group is very much involved. They are seeking funding from Sacramento, not TRRP for the study, and results would come about 18 months after funding.

Orcutt asked Wittler if 47/53 split was factored in. Wittler stated it was a 50/50 split. Person explained if the ROD were superimposed, would get weighted average. Orcutt asked about how early flow rates, prior to determination of water year type, are established. Wittler stated flow rate for that period is based on an average. Naman asked about Lewiston Powerhouse retrofit. Wittler commented an advantage would be drawing cooler water.

Wittler shared a chart of ROD water-year river volumes, according to water-year type, that showed greater reliance on tapping reservoir more during drier years under current management. Wittler urged giving thought to what we would do, how we would adapt management to deal with next drought, especially one lasting several years. Discussion ensued. Polos stated he thought there was no legal mandate for 50/50, that the obligation existed to ensure flow in river. Naman commented indications are there will be wider disparity between high and low in the future due to climate change. Brock noted drought planning currently doesn’t begin until the second year of drought. Kautsky asked about basis for 50/50 flows. Wittler and Person responded. Further clarification needed on whether flows were set by law based on water-year type.

Pflueger commented after Wittler's presentation and departure it would be beneficial to have him make the same presentation to the Trinity County Board of Supervisors.

2012 Work Plan

Faler began discussion on 2012 Work Plan, noting an average of 21% for Program administration over past 10 years. Proposed administrative spending for 2012 is close to 19% including but not imposing the 1.8 cost escalation per Employment Cost Index. She noted the sum moved to Science and costs for Data Management were moved to Administrative Management. Funding for relocation of staff member remains a standing budget item and reflects past several years.

Clarke presented the proposed FY 2012 Science Work Plan beginning with an explanation of how it was arrived at and provided a 37-page Prioritized List developed the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT). He explained the Science Program Coordinator developed the Science Work Plan with input from the IDT and technical work groups. Work groups were identified, needs prioritized; Study plans are to be reviewed by independent experts and will be revised accordingly.

IDT recommendation is to use the prioritization in the FY 2012 Science Work Plan to allocate funds from the Science Projects budget line.

IDT developed Preliminary Work Plan from integration of work group lists; Solicitation package development identifies four different paths for addressing needs: Investigation plans; Market research; Existing contract; subgroup or staff; Study plans are now under review; study leads have until August 1 to refine plans. Revised plans will be shared with reviewers. External reviewers assign ratings. Evaluation criteria fell into five categories: Project purpose; Background; Approach; Feasibility; Relevance to Program. Science Advisory Group also asked to review the plans.

Clarke noted further work needs to be done during FY 2013 planning to move in the direction of comprehensive assessments. Environmental compliance monitoring should continue to be funded in the RIG budget and coordinated with the Riparian and Wildlife Work Group. There is need to ensure work done for another work group actually meets their needs. He referenced a list of 10 Big Questions from Platte River Recovery Implementation Program, stating questions such as these were needed to refocus efforts.

Discussion ensued about priorities and the process of determining what they should be. Faler noted the "cutline" within the list determines what gets funded when as funding is available. Hillemeier stated there needs to be a check on that to ensure important, critical projects are not falling below that line. Person clarified that if something moves above the line, something else must fall below it. He noted Program's proposed FY 2012 directs 30% more to Science than past budgets, a significant increase. Faler noted there is an effort to build and maintain a cushion to complete critical projects by pre-funding them.

Kautsky observed the concept is akin to a wave; not being added to, just moving forward in time. Finley explained it provides security in current year of operations to keep projects moving forward.

Faler raised matter of Lewiston project work plan, noting input indicates it should not be funded by TRRP.

Budget reflects decrease of \$500,000 for projects.

Millman pointed out efforts need to reflect the effects of the Program on wild salmonid recruitment success. Such information is used by NOAA to manage ocean fisheries and tribal fishing. Hillemeier asked about the timing of the budget; emphasized the importance of below-line projects to fisheries and his concern for those projects. Faler asked for guidance and suggested having work group address concerns. Hillemeier questioned need for creation of buffer to deal with unknowns. Faler explained if buffer expended through allocation, would be last time to have a contingency fun.

Person inquired what was added that altered Science budget. Clarke responded prioritization process has not focused on dollars to this point. Finley commented costs keep going up, budget keeps going down, and she asked, "At what point do we come up with a core set of projects that have to be done and everything else becomes gravy? What becomes the core set of monitoring we always do, at a core level – something that will happen year after year?" Schrock stated there will be intensive external evaluations of the Program. Person pressed time consideration for partners. Faler said there is a need to get the ratio locked down today due to risk-to-projects factor. Finley replied the ratio is not going to solve the problem. She suggested taking the existing prioritization list and creating a core set of projects in a way that is transparent so all know the reasons; set a dollar amount.

Prioritizing wire tagging and adult-holding studies were discussed. Curtis noted wire tagging could be tied to hatchery operations – another deficient budget. Naman asked if TMC had ever asked BOR to fund tagging.

Finley urged the Program to go back and identify what its objectives are first. Nobody has gone to the next step and determined what the most important questions are, she said. "This is backwards. These are the measurements; these are not the questions. Answer those overarching questions first, then dig down deeper. Answer the most important goal first."

Schrock suggested looking at the monitoring protocols in light of the IAP and noted the peer review group could help. Person suggested looking at prioritization of IAP.

Hillemeier concurred it would be good to identify what the base monitoring projects are and to think about prioritizing them. He proposed a motion to provide guidance with flexibility, the percentages not set in stone. Naman asked what other changes to methods, processes, would be helpful. Clarke suggested it would be helpful to group projects; have panels review grouped projects. He described a comment-response matrix and noted updated plans could be reviewed in August.

Clarke asked if there was more discussion on maintaining the buffer. Hillemeier stated that lacking a better explanation, he would prefer the money be used on IAP shortfalls. There was mention of cutting back on the RIG budget. Faler noted a certain amount must be set aside regardless. Finley commented that if the buffer were enough to cover the core set of projects, they would always be covered for the following year. By front-loading, projects could continue unimpeded.

Hillemeier proposed a motion. Discussion ensued about need for additional stipulations. Naman asked if there were projects on the list that would need to be funded consecutively. Polos replied many were long-term projects. Whitridge commented the first step would be to sharpen pencils. Faler sought specific direction to force progress. Finley commented the problem with reporting out is there is not a question to report to. Clarke suggested Headwaters Group could take the Program through the exercise of determining core questions to identify core projects. Schrock asked if some questions could be consolidated. Orcutt urged motion address need to prioritize scale analysis and Spring Run Chinook studies, and address inclusion of fisheries management.

Hillemeier refined his motion to state: Generally follow the work group prioritization list, and allocations amongst Program Activities with the caveat that the CWT and age composition need to be continued. Further guidance regarding how to fund these projects may be needed from the TMC as more budget information becomes available. Also direct the Fish work group to develop a comprehensive spring Chinook Assessment program, with associated cost estimates, and bring to the TMC to consider for funding in 2012.

Naman seconded. Motion failed with six votes in favor and two opposed. Voting in favor were Whitridge (TAMWG), Orcutt (Hoopa Valley Tribe), Brock (USFS), Hillemeier (Yurok Tribe), Millman (DFG), Naman (NOAA). Opposed were Person (BOR) and Finley (USFWS).

Person explained he opposed the motion because it did not propose cuts to help in prioritization; in effect, moved away from a prioritization process that already should have taken place. Finley said one reason she opposed the motion was out of concern it did not call for input from the technical work group.

It was suggested that questions to guide priorities be posed in the form of hypotheses.

Faler asked if TMC could support making an expenditure to bring in someone to help refine questions. Orcutt questioned the need. Persons urged holding off on bringing in someone; instead, flesh it out and send it out in advance of the next TMC meeting.

Person asked if there was another motion. Discussion ensued. Whitridge and Finley urged going back to the work group to determine essential project priorities. Orcutt suggested cutting RIG projects. Hillemeier indicated he would prepare another motion while Peterson presented on website.

TRRP Updated Website Preview

Eric Peterson presented on TRRP website update. The two primary components are public outreach and staff resources with layout modeled on DOI's website template. Peterson noted his ongoing website development is live and he would appreciate feedback.

Hillemeir made another motion, seconded by Naman, to generally follow the work group prioritization list, and allocations amongst Program Activities with an eye toward identifying critical projects that may not be funded, especially those that are linked to higher priority projects. If such projects are identified, pursue options to fund these projects. Further guidance regarding how to fund critical projects may be needed from the TMC as more budget information becomes available.
Motion passed unanimously

Open Forum

None

Calendars

Matter considered earlier.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 4:32 PM