DESIGN TEAM WORK GROUP

AUGUST 30, 2015

COLLATION OF WORK GROUP COMMENTS
DRAFT OUT-YEAR CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULE

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INTRODUCTION

The Design Team Work Group (DTWG) received the first draft of the out-year construction schedule for channel rehabilitation projects just prior to the DTWG meeting on August 18, 2015. The schedule was developed by Program staff through consideration of channel rehabilitation projects currently under design and using the logic model to prioritize the remaining project sites by highest potential improvement towards meeting Program goals. The DTWG was asked to provide comments on the schedule prior to the next TMC meeting. The DTWG discussed the schedule at its meeting, but required more time to review the material. I requested that the Design Teams submit comments to me by August 28. The comments presented below were developed by individual Design Teams and do not represent the consensus opinion of the DTWG.

FEDERAL DESIGN TEAM COMMENTS

The Federal Design Team submitted comments at the DTWG meeting. My transcription of the comments is:

(1) The Draft Out-Year Construction schedule does not include the Bucktail projects, which have complete designs.
(2) Developing a construction schedule beyond 2020 has limited value because circumstances are likely to change by that time, necessitating schedule modifications.

HOOPA VALLEY TRIBE COMMENTS

The Hoopa Valley Tribe submitted comments by e-mail. Their comments are:

The construction schedule extending until 2030 isn't what the tribe envisioned in signing the ROD. It would be appropriate to have a frank discussion soon about seeking additional funding, re prioritizing existing funds, looking for cost savings, and trying to be more innovative in accelerating restoration (e.g. winter construction). The Bucktail Phase II project was not explicitly identified in FY16, which we assumed would be the first priority for construction in FY16. There are many projects missing from the list and some of the projects selected for revisits should be more thoroughly vetted. I'm not sure what the genesis of this scheduling exercise was (maybe TMC directive?) but hopefully we can be more involved in future iterations

which should strive to create a more robust implementation schedule. The proposed funding and recent TMC budgets have construction at arbitrary levels that do not reflect upcoming projects.

YUROK TRIBE COMMENTS

The Yurok Tribe submitted extensive comments in a Word Document. Their comments are:

Comments

The schedule is missing up to 12 projects depending on how you count: Bucktail, Hatchery, Deadwood, Upper Rush Creek, Lower Rush Creek, Poker Bar, Tom Lang Gulch, China Gulch, Upper Steiner, Middle Steiner, Upper Conner. Some of these missing projects may have been assumed as "no action" alternatives but that needs explicitly identified, along with the rationale. The Sheridan Creek project did not subsume the Oregon Gulch project so the question mark on the Oregon Gulch project should be removed. The schedule arbitrarily assumes some sites get revisited (Vitzthum Gulch, Trinity House Gulch) but does not include other sites that have been discussed for revisit (e.g. Hocker Flat). The schedule arbitrarily assumes a $3 million annual construction funding cap. The schedule was supposed to include both design and construction but only considers construction. The construction schedule needs to have a date or version number printed on it to keep track of the latest version.

The TRFE described a 6 year construction window to complete all channel rehabilitation projects (3 years for Phase 1 and 3 years for Phase 2). The projected construction schedule is troubling as it extends construction to 2030 and would extend past that once the missing projects are added. This makes for a 25 year plus construction schedule (starting in 2005) which is unacceptable because this unduly delays the restoration of tribal trust fishery resources, will not be supported by Congress or the stakeholders, and diminishes the rate of fish response making it more difficult to detect.

Recommendations

A comprehensive implementation plan (scope, schedule, and budget) is needed to complete the complete all remaining channel rehabilitation within a reasonable timeframe. The schedule needs to start in 2005 and include all 47 projects specified in the TRFE so we have an accurate accounting of projects constructed, outstanding construction projects, "no-action" alternative projects, and revisited projects (already constructed and planned revisits). Developing this plan requires action from both the TMC and the Design Team.

TMC Actions

The TMC needs to establish a completion deadline for all remaining construction, identify an appropriate funding plan, and review and approve a revised design and schedule.

Channel Rehabilitation Completion Deadline

The TMC needs to set completion deadline for all remaining construction projects that is both logistically feasible and politically acceptable. Establishing the completion deadline is an essential first step needed to define the funding and scope aspects of the implementation plan. A logistically feasible and politically acceptable timeframe to complete construction is 5 to 6 years from now (instead of the 15 years proposed). TRRP has the administrative capacity to support

environmental permitting to construct approximately 2 sites per year. Additional contractor support would be needed if a faster project implementation rate is required.

Funding

The arbitrary cap of $3 million of TRRP funds for construction is inadequate to complete the channel rehabilitation projects within a reasonable timeframe. Establishing the appropriate level of funding to complete the remaining projects requires additional feedback from the Design Team Work Group (discussed below). Increased construction funding is available from three sources: reprioritizing TRRP funds, increasing CVPIA funds, and seeking supplementation external funding. The TMC should critically examine program funding priorities to maximize funding available to complete all remaining channel rehabilitation in a reasonable timeframe. The TMC should also to have a direct conversation with CVPIA management (David Mooney and Rod Wittler) to discuss ramping-up funding for CVPIA over the next 5-6 years rather than spreading it out over 15. A site visit to Limekiln Gulch with the TMC and CVPIA before construction activities are complete would be a good way to show what is possible in remote locations on the Trinity using low impact construction techniques. Additionally, TRRP needs to find creative ways in securing additional external dollars through end of year funds within DOI and grant programs like Prop 1, NOAA, NSF, and others. The program should start by submitting a Prop 1 grant (due mid-September) to build the Bucktail project and Bucktail bridge. Securing external funds (DOI end of year funding, grants) requires shovel ready projects. There should always be 2-3 project designs shovel ready in the cue for opportunistic funding cycles. All the more reason to not slow down designing projects.

Review and approve design and construction schedule

The Executive Director working together with the Design Team Work Group needs to develop a comprehensive implementation plan that proposes design and construction schedule / budget to complete the remaining construction projects (including identification of "no action" projects and revisits). The proposed implementation plan then requires review and approval by the TMC.

Design Team Actions

The Design Team Work Group needs to work with RIG staff and the Executive Director to develop the comprehensive implementation plan and provide technical input to TMC. The technical input should provide recommendations on which projects sites warrant construction (new or revisit) and which project sites warrant the "no action" alternative. The construction sites then need to be prioritized and 5% conceptual designs and construction cost estimates provided. This information helps inform the schedule and funding aspects of the implementation plan developed by the Executive Director and TMC. The TMC approved Logic Model and the emerging River Corridor Plan should be utilized as the technical basis for the Design Team Work Group to recommend which projects are the highest priority to construct based on biological, physical, and riparian objectives; which projects to re-visit; which projects should choose the "no action" alternative; and develop 5% concept designs and construction cost estimates.

TRRP needs to maintain a standing stock of 2 to 3 fully designed and shovel ready projects to facilitate supplemental external funding. To accomplish this, the Design Team Work Group, TRRP RIG Staff, and monitoring teams needs to stay a year ahead of implementation, which

includes environmental compliance, permitting, contracting, landowner agreements, etc. This is not the time in the program for pause and slow down, but rather to build momentum, push forward and complete in-channel construction before the opportunities are lost.

COORDINATOR (CONOR SHEA) COMMENTS

After reviewing the comments prepared by the Design Teams and holding discussions with the DTWG and individual team members, I feel it would be useful to pass along several personal observations and recommendations.

Short-term Schedule

It is important for the Program to set a short-term (defined as three-year to five-year) design and construction schedule. This will aid work-force planning for all Design Teams, clarify deadlines, and improve design and construction efficiency. The short-term schedule will also assist by setting priorities for permit activities, land-owner discussions, public information, and other project implementation activities.

The DTWG should play an active role in helping to set the short-term schedule for construction. I expect that design of the Lower Valley suite of projects will be sufficiently advanced by the fall to allow for development of accurate cost estimates. When the scale and details of the projects are established, the DTWG will be able to set the order of project construction and recommend scheduling based on available funding. This requires Program management to identify funding capacity.

I believe that all of the Design Teams would agree that it is important to maintain a back-log of completed project designs in the event that funding increases occur. The design schedule should account for completing sufficient projects to maintain an appropriate back-log.

Long-term Schedule

The Program should develop a long-term schedule that identifies the remaining projects that will be constructed and any projects that require re-visit. There is some concern among Design Team members that the draft schedule includes some projects that is should not and is missing other projects. It has been suggested to me that not all of the remaining projects will require equivalent efforts. Some project areas have little potential for improving habitat and may require little action. The potential of other project areas suggests that large construction work is appropriate.

Development of the long-term schedule requires careful planning. Until recently, channel rehabilitation projects have been designed on a stand-alone basis without consideration of how the individual project interacted with other elements of the Program. The Program has or is now developing tools (DSS, Fish Production Model, River Corridor Plan, etc.) which will allow for developing channel rehabilitation projects that are better integrated into meeting program-wide goals rather than just site-specific outcomes. These tools will provide better means for strategically planning the scale and scope of the remaining projects to produce an integrated set of projects.

My recommendation is to task the Design Teams to work collaboratively to develop a long-term plan for the remaining projects that identifies the projects to be built or re-visited, the order for these projects, concept level plans for each project, and order-of-magnitude cost estimates. The concept-level plans should consider how the individual project will interact. Alternate schedules can be developed reflecting varying amounts of annual construction funding.

Funding Levels

Several of the Design Teams have expressed concerns that draft schedule extends the time of completion for the remaining Phase II projects to 2030 and beyond. The draft projection is based on current funding limits and the costs associated with recent projects. Developing a long-term plan and schedule should identify potential construction costs, and potential completion dates based on available funding. If these dates are unacceptable to the TMC or others, then the TMC will have to provide direction on increasing construction funding or scaling back projects to reduce the project completion date.

Other Schedule Limits

It should be noted that beyond construction funding levels, another limit on construction schedule are support services to implement projects. The Program's permitting staff is limited to one full-time person. Many key staff from the Design Teams are supervising construction this summer and are not available to work on completing design work. Development of both short-term and long-term schedules should account for available staffing levels and project development bottlenecks.