

San Joaquin River Restoration Program
Restoration Goal Technical Feedback Group Meeting
Tuesday, September 22, 2009
California State University, Stanislaus
Turlock, CA

MEETING NOTES

Attendees

Steve Chedester	San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority
Douglas DeFlicht	Reclamation
Dave Encinas	California Department of Water Resources
Kevin Faulkenberry	California Department of Water Resources
Ali Gasdick	Reclamation
Sarge Green	CWI – CSU Fresno
Jason Guignard	FISHBIO
Gerald Hatler	California Department of Fish and Game
Steve Haze	Sierra RCD/ SJVWLF
Jennifer Koepcke	Kearns & West
TJ Kopschy	Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board
Stephen Lee	Reclamation
Bill Luce	Friant Water Users Authority
Scott McBain	SJR TAC
Rod Meade	SJRRP Restoration Administrator
Leslie Mirise	National Marine Fisheries Service
Dave Mooney	Reclamation
Bob Mussetter	TetraTech
Bruce Orr	Stillwater Science
Steve Ottemoeller	Friant Water Users Authority
Monty Schmitt	Natural Resources Defense Council
Peter Vorster	The Bay Institute
Sharon Weaver	San Joaquin River Parkway Trust
Dennis Westcot	San Joaquin River Group

MEETING SUMMARY

Introduction and Program background (Reclamation)

Dave Mooney began the meeting with group introductions, and explained that the meeting would focus on monitoring and reporting. Dave reviewed the Settlement background and goals, and provided an overview of the San Joaquin River Restoration Program (SJRRP or Program) timelines and roles and responsibilities (including those of the Restoration Administrator (RA) and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)).

Monitoring and Management Purpose and Objectives (Reclamation)

The Program is proposing a monitoring and management framework that would call for an Annual Technical Report which will be the instrument for assembling information, communicating hypotheses and plans, and providing opportunities for comments. Regularly

scheduled drafts will provide a snapshot on how the framework is being implemented. An outline of potential sections was presented.

Based on a question from the group, it was noted that the Program's monitoring and management framework addresses the requirements of and the activities needed to implement the Settlement. Some of these monitoring and management activities may already be in place and implemented by others. Monitoring and management activities that are outside of the scope of the Program will continue to be undertaken by other agencies.

The group noted the following:

- Although water quality monitoring is not required in the Settlement, specific water quality monitoring activities will be conducted as part of the biological monitoring program. The group asked that the framework clarify which water quality constituents will be monitored and where this monitoring will occur.
- The Annual Technical Report could serve as a "one-stop shop" for public information on SJRRP monitoring data.
- Real-time human capacity may be needed to see what is happening in locations without monitoring devices.

Problem Statement, Conceptual Model and Assumptions (Reclamation)

Problem statements will describe specific needs or areas of interest for the upcoming monitoring activities. Conceptual model and assumptions describe the current understanding of the river and its potential responses to changes. The Program has developed a series of problem statements and associated conceptual models based on the RA's and the TAC's input, and the Program's objective to avoid or minimize seepage impacts. These problem statements and conceptual models can be categorized into two categories: physical (e.g. hydrology, hydraulics, and geomorphology) or biological (e.g. temperature, habitat, Hills Ferry Barrier, and passage). Water Year 2010 problem statements for physical and biological processes monitoring were discussed. Hypotheses and monitoring and data collection methods for each component were described.

The group noted the following:

- The Program objectives and RA and TAC objectives have been merged together to develop the hypotheses to test for Water Year 2010 Interim Flows.
- Monitoring will help assess whether baseline flows assumptions in the Settlement are correct.

Physical Parameters Monitoring and Hypotheses (Tetra Tech and CA Department of Water Resources)

Bob Mussetter and Dave Encinas presented the physical parameters hypothesis. Three main physical parameters hypothesis were discussed as follows: flow quantity and timing, hydraulics, and geomorphology. Monitoring activities are being implemented for the Water Year 2010 Interim Flows to test some of these hypotheses.

The group noted the following:

- A question was asked as to whether flow was the only method being used to test gravel movement. It was noted that Water Year 2010 Fall and Spring releases will focus on flow, however other actions are being considered for the future.

- With regard to seepage monitoring, the Program noted that 33 groundwater monitoring wells are permitted and currently being installed along public rights-of-way. The Program is also working with landowners to install push-point wells on private property.
- There was a suggestion that the Program should clearly identify how it intends to address uncertainty and specifically uncertainty related to flood flows, along with what response will be taken in the event of flooding.
- The need for a pre-event rapid response plan was expressed.
- A request was made to measure sand transport in Reach 1 to help identify changes, if any, in sand storage in Reach 1 with changes in flows.

Biological Monitoring and Hypotheses (CA Department of Fish & Game)

Gerald Hatler presented the biological parameters hypothesis and the data collection methods that will be used to address them. The biological monitoring program is guided by the Program's Fisheries Management Plan and by the life history needs of salmonid and native fish. Habitat information is divided into "macrohabitat," which measures spatial extent and distribution of habitat classification units; and "microhabitat," which will provide detailed measurements of physical characteristics for sub-sample units.

Based on a question from the group, it was noted that water temperature monitoring sites include areas that are well mixed in order to capture primary flow data for the temperature model. Other areas, such as external refugia or places where there might be thermal stratification, will also be monitored. Some initial efforts will also be conducted to monitor temperatures in captured gravel pits. There will be some gaps in temperature monitoring this Fall due to limited access to some sites. It is unknown if these access issues will be resolved by Spring. However, the Program anticipates that there will be enough monitoring stations to get an idea of certainty and performance of the models.

The group noted the following:

- A long-term strategy to manage the Hills Ferry Barrier is not yet in place, and the barrier will continue to be operated on a seasonal basis from September to December. There are physical limitations that reduce management options (e.g. the barrier has operational issues at flows of over 1,000 cfs). Concern for steelhead was noted. Reclamation and NMFS are working to develop a monitoring and recovery plan for steelhead for the spring flows.
- It is anticipated that warm water species, including many predators, might not survive with increased flows in the upper portions of the San Joaquin River as the river will transition from a warm water system to a cold water system. This should aid in predator management. Studies on the Lower Tuolumne River indicate that bass abundance fluctuates over time depending on flows. Predation issues may need further consideration.
- Some recreational activities may be impacted by a change in species composition. Methods to reduce impacts to recreational resources should be developed.
- Monitoring of out-migrating salmon and salmon survival will not occur for a while as salmon will not be reintroduced to the system for a few years.

Incorporation of Results (Reclamation)

Dave Mooney presented the timeline for development of the Annual Technical Report from draft to public comment to final report. A final report is expected in March of each year. Real-time, provisional, data necessary for making adjustments to flow implementation will be provided on the project or other publically accessible website. Quality assessed data will be available likley within a month to a year, depending on the data source.

Program Update and Next Meeting (Reclamation)

The following program updates were provided:

- The Reach 4B, Eastside Bypass, and Mariposa Bypass Low Flow Channel and Structural Improvements Project Notice of Intent/Notice of Preparation (NOI/NOP) has been published and comments are due Friday, October 9.
- The Final Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact/ Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration for Interim Flows is scheduled for release this week, and the program is on target for an October 1 Interim Flows release, pending additional permits.
- The Draft Program Environmental Impact Statement/Report (PEIS/R) will be complete at the end of 2009.
- The next Restoration Goal Technical Feedback Group Meeting will occur in November. Topics may include modeling and analysis tools, and an update on Interim Flows. A technical discussion of the site-specific channel improvements projects will occur at a December or January meeting.