

**San Joaquin River Restoration Program
Fishery Management Work Group
Technical Feedback Group Meeting**

**Monday, September 8, 2008
California State University, Stanislaus, Turlock, California**

Meeting Summary

Attendees

Chris Acree	Revive the San Joaquin
Matt Baquera	Fresno Fly Fishers for Conservation
Steve Chedester	San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority
Marile Colindres	San Joaquin River Conservancy
Brian Colleran	San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust
Matt Cover	California State University, Stanislaus
Ane Deister	SJRRP Restoration Administrator
Karen Dulik	CA Department of Water Resources
Ron Forbes	Interested Party
Charles Gardiner	CirclePoint
Gerald Hatler	CA Department of Fish and Game
Abimael Leon	CA Department of Water Resources
Bill Luce	Friant Water Users Authority
Melinda Marks	San Joaquin River Conservancy
Scott McBain	McBain & Trush
Jeff McLain	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Steve Ottemoeller	Friant Water Users Authority
Jason Phillips	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Dan Odenweller	Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board
Monty Schmitt	Natural Resources Defense Council
Stephanie Theis	MWH
Kim Webb	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Bill Swanson	MWH
Ali Gasdick	CH2M HILL

Note: Attendee list may not be complete.

Introductions and Meeting Purpose

Ali Gasdick welcomed the meeting attendees and led introductions of those present (see list above). The Technical Feedback Meetings are intended to provide a forum to share information and allow for feedback from stakeholders and the public on the development of the Fish Management Plan (FMP). Jeff McLain noted that the purpose of today's meeting was to review the reach-by-reach limiting factors, provide an overview of the development of alternative floodway concepts, and begin discussing the Decision Tree for routing potential future fish management actions.

Review of Progress to Date and Reach-by-Reach Limiting Factors

Jeff McLain reviewed progress-to-date on the reach-by-reach limiting factors including available documents and changes to the limiting factors since the August 2008 Technical Feedback Meeting. The revised limiting factors were discussed for each reach and for the following categories: adult migration, adult holding, spawning and incubation, fry/juvenile rearing, and smolt migration. An additional set of factors was added for yearlings. As described in the previous meeting, the reach-by-reach factors were assessed based on their expected impact on abundance, whereby Primary Priority factors could impact abundance to the extent that the Restoration Goal may not be met and Secondary Priority factors are anticipated to have a low or negligible impact on abundance. The limiting factors assume that the Settlement actions are not in place (continuation of existing conditions).

The following feedback was provided by attendees with regard to the revised reach-by-reach limiting factors:

- Adult harvest may not be a Primary Priority. Jeff McLain noted that the Fish Management Working Group changed this to a Primary Priority because existing fishing regulations will need to be modified to protect spring-run chinook.
- Some of the limiting factor categories continue to be unclear and additional explanation may be needed to clarify.
- Adult carcasses/limited food resources and harvest may be more appropriate as a Primary Priority in Reach 1 in the Draft Yearling Limiting Factors table.
- Exports/Diversions may be more appropriate as a Primary Priority in Reaches 2, 3, and 5 in the Adult Migration Limiting Factors table because of possible false migration pathways in these reaches (diversions at Mendota Pool, Arroyo Canal, and Mud and Salt sloughs).

Alternative Floodway Concepts

Jeff McLain reviewed progress on the development of alternative floodway concepts. Paragraph 13 of the Settlement identifies specific Restoration Flows that will occur under the Settlement. However, the channel capacity in some reaches of the San Joaquin River may not be sufficient to convey these flows and modifications to the channel may be needed. Specifically, substantial modifications are needed in Reaches 2B and 4B (or the Eastside Bypass) to convey the Restoration Flows. These modifications are likely to include setting back levees and construction of a new floodway. In order to determine the width of the potential new channel in both reaches, an understanding of the amount and extent of riparian vegetation is needed for each reach. (The extent of the riparian vegetation affects channel “roughness” and the ability of the channel to convey flows.) Due to the amount of time, cost of construction, and potential loss of farmland needed to set back existing levees, determining a floodway width early in the process is critical to meeting the schedule set forth in the Settlement.

Three initial floodway descriptors have been developed. These descriptors are grassey conveyance (minimal habitat, herbaceous species and bare earth), riparian ribbon (1 to 2 mature canopy widths resulting in approximately 50 to 100 feet of vegetation on the ground), and forest corridor (channel and riparian vegetation limited by major infrastructure constraints). Using these descriptors, the following four Floodway Concepts have been developed:

- Draft Concept A – Concept A focuses on downstream rearing and would include rearing habitat in Reaches 1A, 1B, and 4B (or Eastside Bypass). This concept would mirror the life history pattern of spring-run Chinook salmon in Butte Creek.
- Draft Concept B – Concept B focuses on upstream rearing and would include rearing habitat in Reaches 1A, 1B, and 2B. This concept would mirror the life history pattern of spring-run Chinook salmon in Mill and Deer creeks.
- Draft Concept C – Concept C includes rearing in Reaches 1A and 1B, with variable life history and possible rearing in Reach 2B and 4B (or Eastside Bypass). This concept includes more of a variable life history with rearing possible in both upstream and downstream reaches.
- Draft Concept D – Concept D includes rearing in Reaches 1A and 1B. Reaches 2B and 4B (or Eastside Bypass) would function as a migration corridor with only modest investment in these reaches.

The varying amounts of on-the-ground vegetation in the Alternative Floodway Concepts are used to determine an overall roughness factor for engineering analysis. Each floodway/floodplain type will be a mosaic of habitats.

The following feedback was provided by attendees:

- Information should be clarified to show that either Reach 4B or the Eastside Bypass are possible flow routing options.
- Additional information on the actions common to all reaches is needed to better understand how the different Alternative Floodway Concepts would work towards meeting the Restoration Goal.
- The creation of rearing habitat in the Chowchilla Bypass may also have fishery benefits.

The group discussed the need for additional information on the actions that are common to all reaches. It was noted that some of these actions may be restoration actions (such as opportunistic restoration of riparian vegetation in all reaches), while others may be infrastructure improvement measures (such as channel capacity improvements necessary to convey the Restoration Flows).

Decision Tree for Routing Actions

Jeff McLain provided an overview of the Decision Tree for Routing Potential Actions. The Decision Tree is a tool to screen potential future actions and determine the following: if an action should be fully implemented, if an action should be implemented as a pilot project, if targeted research should be conducted to reduce uncertainty of an action, or if the action should be discarded. The Decision Tree is intended to provide a transparent process to address the limiting factors and move forward with specific, targeted restoration actions. All of the Settlement Paragraph 11 actions will be routed through the Decision Tree along with all other potential actions to address the limiting factors.

The following feedback was provided by attendees:

- A component for cost in the Decision Tree would be informative. If actions are cost prohibitive, it would be good to know this early in the process before substantial effort is spent on developing the action. A cost/benefits analysis component either prior to, as

part of, or after the Decision Tree routing could be considered. Cost considerations should include both construction costs along with long-term operations and maintenance costs.

- It is not clear if and how the Decision Tree would address actions that are outside of, or not directly part of, the Restoration Program, but that may have an impact on the implementation of the Program. Example actions could include changes in water quality and waste discharges.
- Additional information and discussion of the definitions would be helpful in understanding how the Decision Tree is going to be used. If actions are routed into the left-hand box (low worth), then these actions are unlikely to be implemented in a near-term timeframe. Thus, those using the Decision Tree need a clear understanding of definitions to provide transparency and better route actions into appropriate boxes and resulting outcomes.
- There may be a way to prioritize actions that address the same limiting factor based on cost, readiness for implementation, environmental impacts, and political considerations.

Next Steps and Future Meetings

Jeff McLain and Ali Gasdick thanked the meeting attendees for their participation and valuable feedback. The next meeting will be on October 7 at Cal State Stanislaus. The following future meeting topics were identified:

- Additional examples for how actions would be routed through the Decision Tree. It may be useful to distribute these examples to the Technical Feedback Group prior to the meeting.
- Definitions of the limiting factors categories.
- Reach-by-reach actions common to all of the Alternative Floodway Concepts.
- Reintroduction plan.

Contact Ali Gasdick at 916.286.0373 or alicia.gasdick@ch2m.com with additional suggestions for future meeting topics.

The meeting presentation and related project materials will be posted on the project website (www.restoresjr.net).