

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

**Tuesday, November 4, 2008
California State University, Stanislaus, Turlock, California**

Meeting Summary

Attendees

Chris Acree	Revive the San Joaquin
Matt Baquera	Fresno Fly Fishers for Conservation
Matt Bigelow	CA Department of Fish and Game
Ane Deister	SJRRP Restoration Administrator
Ron Forbes	NCCFFF Director
Andrea Fuller	FISHBIO Environmental
Gerald Hatler	CA Department of Fish and Game
Tom Lang	Aquarius Aquarium Institute
Abimael Leon	CA Department of Water Resources
Bill Luce	Friant Water Users Authority
Scott McBain	McBain & Trush
Jeff McLain	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
David Mooney	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Jason Phillips	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Monty Schmitt	Natural Resources Defense Council
Kim Webb	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Bill Swanson	MWH
Ali Gasdick	CH2M HILL

Introductions and Meeting Purpose

Ali Gasdick welcomed the meeting attendees and led introductions of those present (see list above). The purpose of today's meeting is three fold:

1. Bring the Technical Feedback Group up to date on the alternatives formulation process and discuss the current and potential future management of Hills Ferry Barrier.
2. Address differences between the Program's approach to the Fisheries Management Plan and stakeholder input received at the October Technical Feedback Meeting.
3. Provide an update on the progress of the Fisheries Management Plan.

During the introductions, the Technical Feedback Group members identified the following questions regarding the Restoration Program that they would like to have addressed in future meetings:

- What is the status of the Federal legislation? Is it anticipated to pass soon? If not, how will this affect the project schedule?
- How will the Program alternatives be developed?
- What level of detail is needed in the Fisheries Management Plan and the Program's environmental document?

- Is it possible to achieve suitable downstream water temperatures for fish?
- What is an acceptable salmon population size?
- How will the Restoration Program affect the river? What will the river “look like” under the Restoration Program? How will the Program affect areas downstream of the Program study area?
- How will the Program achieve the Restoration Goal?
- Where is the Program in implementing the Settlement? What is the status of the schedule?
- How do we size floodplains? How much is needed and how much is “enough”?
- How will water supply impacts be determined?
- How will the real-time operations and future implementation of the Settlement work? Who will be involved in these decisions and how will the public provide input?

Preliminary Restoration Alternatives – Alternatives Formulation Process

The Program is currently working to develop a final suite of alternatives for analysis in the Draft Program Environmental Impact Statement/Report (EIS/R). The final suite of alternatives will include actions that address the San Joaquin River Restoration Program’s (SJRRP’s) Water Management Goal and the Restoration Goal. A three-step screening process has been undertaken to determine the final suite of alternatives. The first step includes identification of options that would address the Water Management Goal and the Restoration Goal. These options were then screened to determine the ones that could reasonably contribute to either of the SJRRP goals. The second step included grouping the options into initial alternatives. The results of this grouping were described in the Initial Program Alternatives Report released in June 2008. The third step is currently underway. This step consists of a second screening process and reformulation of the initial alternatives. After this second screening and reformulation, the remaining water management and restoration options will be combined into complete Program alternatives intended to address both the Water Management and Restoration Goals. This step and the final suite of alternatives will be described in the Program Alternatives Report which is scheduled for release in December 2008. It is anticipated that the final suite of alternatives in the Program Alternatives Report will be the same suite of alternatives for analysis in the Draft Program EIS/R.

Jeff McLain reviewed progress on the development of preliminary restoration alternatives. As described in the September Technical Feedback Meeting, the channel capacity in some reaches of the San Joaquin River may not be sufficient to convey the Restoration 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.)

As described in the September Technical Feedback Meeting, three initial floodway descriptors have been developed. These descriptors are grassy 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 riparian forest

(channel and riparian vegetation limited by major infrastructure constraints). Using these descriptors, the following series of potential restoration alternatives have been developed

- Reach 1 Focus – This potential alternative would focus efforts in Reach 1, with grassy conveyance to riparian ribbon provided in Reaches 2B and 4B (or Eastside Bypass).
- Reach 2B Focus – This potential alternative would focus 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.
- Reach 4B/ESB Focus – This potential alternative would focus 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.
- Variable Life History Focus – These potential alternatives would focus on providing a variable life history and possible rearing in Reach 2B and 4B (or Eastside Bypass).

The following feedback was provided by attendees with regard to the alternatives formulation process:

- Preliminary actions should be considered as construction of the restoration actions and maturation of vegetation may take many years.
- Additional information on the assumptions used for the hydraulic analysis is needed.
- The lower San Joaquin River was historically a tule marsh-like area. Establishment of a riparian forest in this area may not be desirable.
- The alternatives should be formulated to have multiple benefits, such as fish rearing and flood control benefits. These actions are not mutually exclusive.
- The alternatives should be viewed in terms of the fisheries life history and meeting the various life history needs of the target species.

Preliminary Restoration Alternatives – Hills Ferry Barrier Management

Gerald Hatler and Jeff McLain provided an overview of the current and potential future operations of the Hills Ferry Barrier. The barrier is located on the San Joaquin River, just upstream of the confluence with the Merced River. The barrier is used to redirect upstream migrating adult salmon into suitable spawning habitat in the Merced River. The barrier is installed seasonally from mid-September to mid-December and is operated by the Department of Fish and Game. Possible future operations include the use of an Alaskan Weir and monitoring station similar to that used on the Stanislaus River. A similar configuration could include a monitoring station to count upstream migrating adults and identify species. Monitoring and counting of outmigrating juveniles may also be possible depending on size. Based on a comment from a meeting attendee, it was noted that identifying species for outmigrating juveniles may be more challenging. The group discussed possible operation of the barrier during the Interim Flow and Restoration Flow periods.

The following feedback was provided by attendees with regard to the current and potential future use of Hills Ferry Barrier:

- The potential future use of the barrier as a monitoring location could provide useful information at the lower end of the program study area.

- Preparation of a Barrier Management Plan should be considered to describe potential use of the barrier during Interim Flows and Restoration Flows.
- If a barrier at Hills Ferry were operated for a longer time period during the year, or possibly year-round, additional barrier designs should be considered based on the site characteristics and anticipated range of flows. The current barrier configuration is not likely operable at higher flows due to the sandy substrate at the site.

Approach to the Fisheries Management Plan

Jeff McLain provided an overview of the input received on the Restoration Strategy in the FMP at the October meeting. The Fisheries Management Working Group (FMWG) reviewed various restoration plans in developing the strategy for the FMP. The Restoration Strategy builds upon prior plans, including the Elwha River Fish Restoration Plan, the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, the Chesapeake Bay Program, and the Battle Creek Salmon and Steelhead Adaptive Management Plan. Based on input received at the October meeting, the outline for the FMP was revised. Jeff McLain reviewed the revised outline.

The following feedback was provided by attendees with regard to the approach to the Fisheries Management Plan:

- Additional information is needed on the target audience for the Fisheries Management Plan. Some attendees noted that it is not clear which agencies will be implementing the Plan and the subsequent Fisheries Implementation Plan. Some meeting attendees also noted that the extent of future public and stakeholder outreach and input during program implementation is not clear.
- The FMWG should review the fisheries work that has been conducted on the Sacramento River to see if any of this work is applicable to the San Joaquin River.

Fisheries Management Plan – Update on Progress

Jeff McLain provided an update on the progress of the FMP. The FMP is under development. As described in the October Technical Feedback Meeting, the FMP will be distributed with the Draft Program EIS/R. Selected preliminary sections of the FMP may be distributed for review prior to the release of the entire Plan.

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 December 9 at Cal State Stanislaus.

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

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