

# TRINITY RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL

## *Mission Statement*

*To protect, enhance, restore and revitalize the watershed through collaborative efforts that leverage external resources, work toward common goals, educate and engage community stakeholders, address natural resource issues, and support healthy ecosystems for future generations.*

## Meeting Notes

Tuesday September 26, 2017

TCRCD Conference Room, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

*In attendance: David Schmerge (USFS), Sandra Perez and Mark Lancaster(5Cs), Cindy Buxton and Josh Smith (WRTC); Donna Rupp and Tracy McFadin (TCRCD), Samantha Chilcote (TCFAGC), Marie Peterson (Down River Consulting), Andy Hill (CDFW), Kyle DeJulio (Yurok Tribal Fisheries Dept.), Bobby Chadwick (Trinity County BOS), Bob Morris (SAFE), Sara Acridge (BLM), Mike Dixon (TRRP), and Leslie Hubbard (Trinity County Planning Dept.)*

1. Introductions.

2. 5Cs: Update on grading ordinance. Nark Lancaster reported that the water board is not going to fund the proposal they submitted for creating the grading ordinance. Trinity County wants to retain local control rather than following the water board's "MS4" declaration, which would be expensive to implement and require a full time position to manage. They did fund a small BMP-focused authority to create standards for any encroachments on county roads. But it will be road-based only and not include stream setbacks, etc. The old ordinance drafted by 5Cs (but not adopted) does not address the new cannabis ordinances. T

he Board of Supervisors has directed the Planning Department to create an ordinance by March 2018. Discussion on what should be grandfathered and the possibility of the video training for BMPs online as Mark discussed previously. Leslie Hubbard said she would welcome collaboration from the watershed council on the new ordinance.

3. Marie: Future monitoring of high risk cannabis discharge sites. There is a new cannabis discharge ordinance going into effect October 15. The fees will be tiered based on how close discharge is to water and the % grade on the slope. Marie expressed concern that there is not enough oversight and that the NCRWB director said that instream testing for chemicals is too expensive.

Leslie said that the County received funding from TRRP to test tributaries for excessive nutrient loads, insecticide and pesticides. They have contracted it to Integrated Ecology Research Center (IERC). The contract was written for the upper 40 – the historical TRRP watershed work section. Discussion around the fact that that area does not include the most intense grows and that the South Fork should have been included. The Watershed Center has GIS mapping that shows where the most intense grows are located. The current study will not capture the most impacted areas. Someone at TRRP was under the impression that it had to stay in the upper 40, but that restriction has been removed. Discussion of getting a mod to expand the location. Leslie said testing has already begun and location cannot be changed for this round of testing, but if it comes up again in the future she will look into it.

4. Donna – What is your watershed priority? Discussion that the TRWC is an advisory group for the WaterSmart project including watershed analysis and ask for input from all present on what they consider to be priority projects in the watershed.

*Over half of group said priority is water quantity/availability in all tributaries. Another priority that received widespread agreement was need for more data and monitoring.*

Cindy – Fuels reduction. Discussion on how both the Fire Safe Council and the Community Wildfire Protection Plan address wildland fire and fuel reduction. Group agreed that while this should be brought up in this watershed plan, the plan should reference other plans that have already been created.

Josh – Increase reservoir capacity in Ewing Reservoir for Hayfork residents. More monitoring and more water in tribs.

Bob – Monitoring pesticide discharge from private timberlands.

David – Selection of priority watersheds for restoration in both S. Fork and Mainstem for USFS effort to comply with water board waiver. These are 6<sup>th</sup> field HUC watersheds. He has done an analysis in the S. Fork and has narrowed it down to three – Smokey Creek, Happy Camp and Shell. They are rated using the watershed conditions framework. Waiver suggested that recommendations be made by end of 2016, but it hasn't made Program of Work yet. The TC Collaborative is having a meeting regarding the difficulties encountered with getting items on the USFS Program of Work. David encourages people to work with him if they have strong beliefs regarding which watersheds should be designated in either the mainstem or south fork Trinity.

Samantha – Increase beaver habitat for more water storage and fish habitat. Concern over impact of hatchery fish on wild stocks. Need more baseline data and monitoring (group all agreed). She is also concerned about the huge land disturbances that are taking place (because of cannabis?) and the impacts they will have on the watershed.

Discussion: Mentioned that 5Cs is working on a rapid habitat assessment including presence of invasives on BLM property throughout the watershed. Data will be shared when it is completed. Cindy mentioned that the WRTC is working on a CDFW FRGP proposal to fund stream monitoring on private lands, including juvenile surveys.

Marie – Population impacts on water quantity and expand use of drought maps that were created in 2015 that showed drying of creeks.

Andy – Use of beaver dam analogs in known coho streams would provide best bang for the buck.

Kyle – If we can map the flat areas in the watershed, we will know where flooding and ground water recharge can take place, thus increasing summer flows. Also in the same vein, development should be limited on floodplains so they can provide this function.

Mike – TRRP is looking outside the traditional 40 mile reach below the dam and is interested in habitat connectivity and fine sediment reduction. He mentioned that base flows are a concern, but Program will likely not fund forbearance projects. He said it is important to look at floodplain connectivity, both longitudinal and latitudinal. Suggested that we work where we are finding coho, not historic range.

Discussion on salmon presence/absence. Mark mentioned that he found coho in a trib of Canyon Creek while working on the Helena fire. The upper watersheds provide colder refugia for fish and they have not all been surveyed. The USFS data

from snorkel surveys has good data on where coho are now located. Andy said there is a 1979 report by USFWS and Hoopa on presence in the Hoopa tribes. With the lack of data and so much geography to cover it is hard to know where they are located exactly. Just because they weren't found once, doesn't mean they aren't there. With climate change they have to be able to reach higher refugia. Importance of having process based restoration – storing water on the landscape, ground water storage.

Sara – Overview of what BLM has been working on. Priority is Helena Fire assessment. They have vacancies for Planner, Forester and Ecologist – very short handed.

Mark – Need more base flow: accomplish with more wood structures creating pools and reclaiming mining sites to re-establish floodplains. The cannabis ordinance is critical to watershed health and the TRWC should be actively reviewing it. We need to address the cannabis issues so we can forward with restoration.

Leslie – The CEQA Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration will begin 30 day public review and comment period tomorrow (9/27) and run through 10/26. TRWC can't really comment as a whole because of agencies, but it would be very helpful to have multiple comments received.

Bobbi – Some grows will need their own CEQA process – the County CEQA is not a blanket coverage for all growers. Encourages participation by all in process.

Tracy – Climate change and invasives need to be addressed as watershed priorities.

5. Donna: Watershed Project categories. Donna provided list of categories used by other agencies and grant funders to use in the TRW analysis. It was agreed that recreation could be mentioned in analysis, but not covered in depth. Group agreed to the higher level categories listed, as long as the details were available to “drill down to.” Kyle suggested that floodplain work should be a separate category. Donna asked group to review and send back any other comments to her by email.

6. Other topics – Grant opportunity noted.

7. Program work/updates/news

- Yurok – Have been working on mainstem TRRP project at Sheridan. They have also been doing carcass surveys.
- Hoopa - Not Present.
- 5Cs – They are buttoning up the Sharber Creek project and working on the BLM lands for road and creek assessments. They'll be working on the BAER with BLM up Canyon Creek in the wake of the Helena Fire; design and permitting projects include dam removal on Manzanita Creek (Big Bar), Sidney Gulch at USFS compound, and Lee Fong park design on Sidney Gulch.
- Watershed Center –The large wood placement project on the South Fork is on hold until 2018. The Hayfork Wetlands official opening is scheduled for October 14 – everyone is invited. The Karuk have petitioned to have Spring Chinook listed as a separate ESU. Cindy submitted a grant proposal to National Forest Foundation to build existing environmental ed programs and curriculum, especially getting children to interact with Natural Resource professionals.

- USFS – The EIS for the 2015 Timber Salvage is available. Treatment plans for legacy sediment sites will be submitted this week to the water board – work may begin next summer; Road work in Burnt Ranch area.
- NRCS – Not present.
- Trinity County – CalRecycle is here to help clean up toxic waste from Helena Fire on private property. Full information is on Trinity County website.
- CDFW – The Junction City weir is coming out soon. He is working on spawning survey and reports on fish work. It will be available soon.
- TCRCDD – West Weaver Creek Rehab. Project is moving along with construction underway.
- TRRP – Mike reported that they will be finished with their in-river work by Saturday (Sept. 30). They are working on coming up with plans to address more experimental spring restoration flows to more accurately mimic high winter flows.
- BLM – There was one bid on the GVC timber sale and it was accepted. Fuels reduction on Indian Creek; the major land use plan update – NCIP. The scoping is available on line but the alternative developments for NEPA should be out for public review soon.
- Down River Consulting – They are working with clients on 1600 permits; also working on a floodplain restoration project in Hayfork.
- SAFE – They have been working with the TC Collaborative, on the cannabis ordinance and on Huffman’s land bill.
- TCFAGC – Nothing more to add at this time.

Next Meeting: Tuesday November 28, 2017, 10 am TCRCDD conference room

Note: the following item was in the April notes but was not addressed at this meeting due to coordinator oversight. There has been some movement on this topic by the Trinity County Fish and Game Commission. I will check with Samantha and ask if she can address it at our November meeting.

*April notes: Bob mentioned that the film and discussion held in late February on Climate adaptation was informative and would like to see a proactive MOU between CDFW, TRRP and CalTrans on beaver relocation rather than killing when beavers build by roads. Group agreed to add to September agenda.*