

Ecosystem Restoration Subcommittee Meeting
Wednesday, April 9, 2003
Resources Agency Auditorium
1416 Ninth Street, Sacramento, CA
Meeting Summary

Subcommittee members (or their alternates) and agency liaisons present:

Gary Bobker (TBI)	Diana Jacobs (CDFG)
Ryan Brodrick (DU)	Dave Harlow (USFWS)
Serge Birk (CVPWA)	Mike Acetuino (NOAA-Fisheries)
Walt Hoye (MWD)	Tim Ramirez (Resources Agency)
Lisa Holm (CCWD)	Steve Shaffer (CDFA)
Todd Manley (NCWA)	Scott Clark (USACE)
Brent Walthall (KCWA)	Dave Gore (USBR)
Bernice Sullivan (Friant WUA)	Carolyn Yale (EPA)
Steve Evans (FOTR)	
Ronda Lucas (CFBF)	
Doug Lovell (Federation of Fly Fishers)	
Michael Schaver (Big Valley Rancheria)	
Tom Zuckerman (CDWA)	

Introductions and Subcommittee Status

The meeting began with introductions and a subcommittee report. The summary of the previous meeting was reviewed and a typographical error identified. The subcommittee approved the summary with the error corrected.

Report on Working Landscapes Subcommittee framework

Co-chair Ryan Brodrick reviewed the Working Landscapes Subcommittee Framework document and asked for comments to come to him in three weeks. Co-chair Gary Bobker encouraged continued dialogue between the subcommittees on the Framework document and any other recommendations that the Working Landscapes Subcommittee considers making that are directed to the Ecosystem Restoration Program. Ronda Lucas emphasized a need for that communication to go both ways.

Ecosystem Restoration Program Status Report

Dan Castleberry began his report by announcing that the California Bay-Delta Authority (CBDA) had moved from the Resources Building to the John Moss Federal Building (650 Capitol Mall, 5th floor). He apologized for any disruption in communications caused by the move. Dan also reported that GCAP, the new contracting entity for most ERP contracts, had begun contacting grant recipients

for grants resulting from the 2002 Proposal Solicitation Package. He also said that the Environmental Water Program was moving ahead with plans presented to the subcommittee at the February 13th meeting, and that the ERP was gearing up to develop performance metrics consistent with the presentation by Kim Taylor of the Science Program at the February 13th meeting. Dan also noted that the ERP is working on its Multi-year Program Plan and Year 4 Work Plan, and expected to bring the plan to the subcommittee at the May meeting.

Dan Ray of the CBDA staff gave a brief presentation on the status of the latest selection panel recommendations. Dan stated that the panel had recently met and would be forwarding its next set of recommendations concerning proposals recommended for consideration as directed actions through the CALFED process. The ERP expects those initial recommendations to be available to the public in late May. The initial recommendations would be available for public comment for 30 days, after which a final recommendation would be developed. These will likely be the first set of funding recommendations that the ERP would submit to the new California Bay-Delta Authority, so Dan said he wasn't sure when funding decision might be finalized.

Nancy Ullrey of the CBDA staff gave a brief presentation about the Annual Work Plan status, schedule, and goals and objectives. Nancy explained that the ERP implementing agencies (Department of Fish and Game, Fish and Wildlife Service, and NOAA-Fisheries) were working with CBDA staff to draft the Multi-year Program Plan and Year 4 Annual Work Plan. Nancy expected that the subcommittee would have copies of the plan to review prior to their May meeting, and that a portion of the May meeting would be spent discussing the plan. Nancy then explained that the goals and objectives that will be in the plan are the same as those articulated in prior ERP planning documents. Nancy then walked the subcommittee through the goals and objectives for the Ecosystem Restoration Program.

Mercury strategy

Dan Castleberry then introduced Jim Wiener from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. Jim was one of the authors of the draft "Mercury Strategy for the Bay-Delta Ecosystem: A Unifying Framework for Science, Adaptive Management, and Ecological Restoration". Jim explained that he was one of three authors for the strategy, and that the strategy was developed with support from the CALFED Bay-Delta Program and with input obtained in two public workshops attended by local managers as well as local and external technical experts. Jim also noted he would be giving a more detailed presentation on the strategy following the subcommittee's meeting for those interested in the more technical aspects.

Jim showed slides highlighting the level of mercury contamination in the Bay-Delta system. He noted that the challenge is to avoid increasing the exposure of biota to methylmercury, the highly toxic form that readily accumulates in exposed

organisms and biomagnifies to high concentrations in fish and wildlife. Jim talked about the six components of the strategy: (1) Quantification and evaluation of mercury and methylmercury sources; (2) Remediation of mercury source areas; (3) Quantification of effects of ecosystem restoration on methylmercury exposure; (4) Monitoring of mercury in fish, health-risk assessment, and risk communication; (5) Assessment of ecological risk; and (6) Identification and testing of potential management approaches for reducing methylmercury contamination.

Many questions were asked during the presentation. Jim answered these questions and recommended that the subcommittee look at the detailed recommendations in the draft strategy. He encouraged the subcommittee to continue with restoration activities, but to do so with “both eyes open.” Jim emphasized that there was still much more that needed to be understood about the processes involved with methyl mercury, which is why the principle of adaptive management is so important when dealing with methyl mercury.

Battle Creek restoration project and related activities update

Rebecca Fris of the CBDA noted that the subcommittee had expressed an interest in the status of the Battle Creek restoration project, especially given recent reports that the project needed additional funding. She explained that she had asked some key individuals associated with efforts on Battle Creek to update the subcommittee. She introduced Carl Werder (USBR), Harry Rectenwald (CDFG), Scott Hamelberg (USFWS) and Sharon Paquin-Gilmore (representing the Battle Creek Watershed Conservancy). Rebecca also noted that Dan Castleberry would propose some next steps for the ERP to address the cost overruns.

Carl started by noting that there were handouts in the back that complemented the presentation and encouraged everyone to get a copy. Harry gave an overview of the history of the Battle Creek Project. It began approximately 15 years ago as a result of SB1086, and it is a collaborative process. The Battle Creek project represents both a good location and the proper habitat attributes for ecosystem restoration; the watershed approach presented itself as the best way to focus on this restoration effort. The local economy is resource-based, and all the water rights are held by PG&E; that PG&E is the only water rights holder makes it easier for the program.

Scott next presented an overview of the Coleman National Fish Hatchery and some of the projects associated with that. The fish hatchery uses an ozone water treatment system (more than \$20 million in CVPIA funding) that has allowed the hatchery to rear fall-run Chinook salmon without IHN infection, something that had never been done before. Scott also noted that efforts to screen the hatchery intakes and upgrade the hatchery weir were also planned or underway.

Harry presented the principles for project development: (1) cooperative approach for FERC relicensing; (2) developing a functioning ecosystem and a functioning hydropower system; and (3) community involvement and acceptance.

Carl then discussed the project features in detail, focusing on the reasons for the increased costs. Many questions were asked about design features and costs and Carl answered the questions. Carl provided handouts showing the cost increase or decrease for each of the project features. Total cost was up about \$34 million from 1999 estimates, to total \$62 million in costs. Carl also emphasized that Reclamation would need to receive the additional funds by October 1, 2003 to avoid delaying construction another year.

Dan Castleberry presented the directed action review process the ERP intends to use to review a revised proposal for the Battle Creek project. He noted it would be based on the directed action review process presented to subcommittee in October and December, but modified to address scope and nature of the Battle Creek project. He said it would consist of staff assisting Reclamation in proposal revision; technical review by a team tailored to the project; comments solicited from regional entities, local governments, and previous commenters; and a Selection Panel recommendation to funding agencies. Dan stated the technical review would focus on two questions: (1) Are the costs for each of the components or tasks described in the project documents reasonable and justified?, and (2) Are the designs for each of the components of the project cost effective given guidelines identified in the MOU between PG&E and the agencies? Dan explained that the review panel should be composed of folks with expertise in fish passage and screening, dam removal, hydroelectric facility engineering, fish biology, fluvial geomorphology and hydrology, and habitat restoration and mitigation. Dan asked for comments on the proposed approach.

In general, there was support for the approach to reviewing a revised proposal for the Battle Creek project. Diana Jacobs noted the need for expertise in road building since some of the costs were associated with an access road on a steep slope. Several members of the subcommittee expressed concern that the review process was focused on reviewing the project as described in the MOU between PG&E and the agencies, and that the larger question of whether that approach was still cost effective wasn't being addressed. Zeke Grader of PCFFA and Battle Creek Working Group distributed written comments to members of the subcommittee articulating this concern. Doug Lovell supported the technical review going forward, but wanted to make sure that costs were assessed consistent with the beneficiary pays approach. Others expressed concerns about cost-sharing and equity. Serge Birk noted that a delay may be acceptable in order to comply with all required public process. Carl Werder agreed that he wouldn't mind delaying a year if it meant that the project would improve, but warned that costs would likely increase as time passed.

All agreed that the subcommittee should remain engaged in the Battle Creek project.

Next Steps for the Subcommittee

Reviewing the ERP's program plan and receiving an update on the Battle Creek project were identified as agenda items for the next meeting.

Next Meetings

The next meeting for the Ecosystem Restoration Subcommittee was rescheduled from May 22nd to May 23rd in the CBDA's new office space, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Dan Castleberry also noted that the subcommittee had been invited to meet jointly with the Drinking Water and Water Supply subcommittees on April 25th. Dan promised to forward an agenda for the joint meeting as soon as it was available.