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Sonoma County Salmon Coalition

Meeting Notes

May 28, 2008

Sonoma County Water Agency

Item 1: Introductions

Bob Anderson, Marc Kelley, Robert Klamt, Susan Gorin, Carolyn Wasem, Jeremy Sarrow, Katie Symonds, Charlette Epifanio, Kara Heckert, John Perry, Pete Downs, Mike Dillabough, Claire Anderson, Peter Kiel, Bill Cox, Amy Bolten, Colleen Fernauld, Charlie Carson

Silent Observers: Alan Levine and Brenda Adelman

Item 2: Update on the Farm Bill

The Farm Bill, which includes language and funding for regional watershed approaches (AWEP) is likely to be vetoed by the President, however the general feeling is that there are enough votes in the House and Senate for an over-ride. Assuming it passes in its current form, the conservation section which references regional watershed approaches has \$75 million available annually.

We would seek funds from this for the purposes of construction of off-stream irrigation including: reservoir siting, engineering and construction.

Item 3: Water & Wine

Brian or Mary Ann could not be here today, but an update on their efforts with “water and wine” is appropriate. Working with Trout Unlimited and landowners on issues around AB2121, flows and conservation of salmonids an educational and marketing campaign is under development that ties fish, agriculture and water together in a collaborative and productive way. The first event was at Quivira, here in Dry Creek, and the second event celebrating “water and wine” was held at the Log Cabin in San Francisco. The wineries associated with the program along with TU have formed a relationship to meet the goals of preserving all three: fish, agriculture and water.

We anticipate growing the partnership over the next 6 months. Thanks to Pete Downs of Kendall-Jackson, Bob Anderson of United Winegrowers, Nick Frey of the Sonoma County Winegrape Commission as well as other growers and TU the events were a success.

As a matter of background: TU has another active program in another state where the partnership supports conservation projects. TU received a grant from the California Coastal Conservancy. The grant will be incorporated into that effort. TU received \$600 thousand from the Coastal Conservancy. Monies used have focused on in-stream flow and capital projects. The program is intended to be statewide - beginning here in Sonoma County where there is interest from the landowners.

It would be beneficial to schedule a coordination meeting, including representatives from RCD, NMFS, DFG and other to discuss the plans.

Item 4: Proposed Restoration Projects

Several restoration projects are underway in the Dry Creek Valley. The projects are currently in the planning stages. Three of the five projects included are from the report authored by Dr. Horton (November 2007). The RCD is meeting with landowners on Grape Creek to discuss projects specific to that stream. DFG, NMFS, NRCS and the RCD will work together to engineer and complete the project. Several of these projects were on a list of potential projects forwarded to the SCWA from NMFS.

There are additional projects that should be included. This may be a good time to collect projects that have not been addressed that would provide benefit to salmonids.

In addition to the projects on Grape Creek, the County has a couple of culvert projects – the exact locations on Wine and Crane Creeks were not disclosed.

Item 5: Water Quantity

A question arose as to the value of the projects that did not focus on water quantity. Additionally, some individuals expressed the need to understand ground water and potential management plans.

Dr. Merenlender and Dr. Deitch's work focused on water quantity. Dr. Horton's work focused on the other habitat values required for salmonid recovery.

Karen Gaffney has an Implementation Grant Fund that may be a good fit for off-stream storage. Off stream storage is a potential solution to water quantity issues. This Grant could dovetail with Dr. Merenlender and Dr. Deitch's work.

A comment was made that the "broader the coalition, the better the opportunities for funding".

Item 6: Sonoma County Water Coalition Letter – Potential Response

The Sonoma County Water Coalition distributed a letter to a number of individuals referencing the Salmon Coalition. The Water Coalition had concerns about the efforts of the Salmon Coalition. Several participants in the Salmon Coalition crafted a response to dispel any concerns and address the issues that the Water Coalition letter raised.

The Salmon Coalition response letter has been distributed to all participants.

Two members who signed the Sonoma County Water Coalition letter were in attendance at the meeting. A participant from the Salmon Coalition welcomed their presence, but also indicated that other participants in the Salmon Coalition were disappointed that a letter questioning the Salmon Coalition's work had been written without ongoing attendance or active participation on the part of the Water Coalition.

All individuals and perspectives are welcome and encouraged to participate in the Salmon Coalition. It would be beneficial to understand the differences that exist and build a relationship based on mutual interests of the two groups.

Item 7. Meeting with State Water Resources Control Board Staff – Watershed Approach

Vicky Whitney with the State Water Resources Control Board met with members of the Sonoma community, including representation from agriculture, various resource agencies, and conservation interests to discuss the Watershed Approach within AB 2121 and its potential applicability in sub-basins of the Russian River (Sonoma County). Interested parties need to submit a charter to the State Water Resources Control Board to utilize the approach. Participants will be forwarded a copy of the Anderson Creek Watershed Group charter.

The watershed approach is important in Dry Creek in terms of developing a plan to meet water needs for fish and agriculture. How exactly the State Water Board assumes a role has yet to be determined. Utilizing the charter and watershed approach could potentially require a nexus to one of the following (not all inclusive):

1. Change of place of use
2. 1610 Amendment
3. Prior rights – those existing prior to construction of reservoir

Is the water within the jurisdiction of the Water Agency? Did prior rights exist? These are questions that need further exploration.

The RCD and NRCS are aiding in restoration and enhancement projects. They will not be involved in regulatory aspects of water allotment.

Item 8. Potential to form an Alexander Valley Ag Water Users Group

Several participants in the Salmon Coalition have indicated an interest in forming an Alexander Valley Ag Water Users Group. As the agriculture users move forward on this effort, the Salmon Coalition will keep other participants apprised of the progress.

Item 9. Watershed Approach Submitted to State Water Quality Resource Control Board

A large number of individuals who participate in the Salmon Coalition provided input for the Watershed Approach forwarded to the State Water Quality Resource Control Board. The comments submitted were intended to identify areas where the additional data and information are needed and integrated into an ultimate approach, as well as strengths and existing data and information.

Currently the State Water Quality Resource Control Board is considering two workshops. Potentially, there will be some on the ground training of staff to recognize bypass flows. Karen Nita is in charge of the AB 2121 process. If the State Board is going to have

consultants address the issues raised, the Coalition should hold a workshop to talk about what those issues and the refinement of the model used.

Some participants do not feel that the first round of documents created by the State Water Quality Resource Control Board need to be “thrown out”. However, working with consultants to secure on the ground information would be valuable.

Item 10. Next Meeting,

Wednesday the 25th of June at 10 am

Any information about other meetings will be forwarded to the entire group.