Meeting Summary
Restoration Goal Technical Feedback Group Meeting
Thursday July 18, 2013

Stanislaus County Agricultural Commissioner's Office, 3800 Cornucopia Way, Modesto Calif.
DRAFT

Attendees

Patrick Akers, Calif. Department of Food and Agriculture
Michelle Banonis, Reclamation
Zooey Diggory, Stillwater Sciences
Jason Faridi, Fish Bio
Mark Littlefield, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bill Luce, Friant Water Authority
Florence Maly, Calif. Department of Food and Agriculture
Ron Melcer, Calif. Department of Water Resources
Palmer McCoy, Henry Miller Reclamation District
John Netto, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bruce Orr, Stillwater Sciences
Andrew Raabe, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Julie Rentner, River Partners
Erin Rice, Reclamation
Craig Moyle, MWH
Heather Shannon, MWH
Sharon Weaver, San Joaquin River Parkway Trust
Doug Weinrich, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Monique Wilber, Calif. Department of Water Resources

On the phone:
Scott McBain, McBain & Trush, Technical Advisory Committee

Next Meeting

Time/Date: 1:30 to 4:30 p.m., Sept. 19, 2013
Location: San Luis and Delta-Mendota Water Authority, 842 Sixth St., Los Banos, Calif.

Welcome and Introductions

Craig Moyle, the meeting facilitator, welcomed the meeting participants, and led introductions for on-site and phone participants. He then reviewed the meeting agenda and introduced the meeting topic and speakers. A webinar was established for remote participants to view and follow along with the presentations.

Standing Items

Erin Rice provided an overview of the San Joaquin River Restoration Program, a brief background of the Settlement, a review of the Restoration and Water Management Goals, and a description of the Restoration Goal Technical Feedback Group's purpose. He additionally displayed a hydrograph of Interim Flow releases from Friant Dam from Oct. 2012 to March 2013, and a graph that depicts the Restoration Administrator's recommended Interim Flow releases for April through September 2013.

Monitoring and Analysis Plan

Heather Shannon provided an overview of the 2013 Monitoring and Analysis Plan (MAP), and a review of the 2014 MAP organization and schedule. Key revisions to the 2014 MAP will be the formation of small interdisciplinary groups; development of revised Conceptual Population Model; development of State of Knowledge Sections; and refined questions list. The State of Knowledge section is new and will be included in the introduction section. The public draft MAP is scheduled to be released September 30, 2012, with the final draft released Nov. 15, 2013.

Vegetation Transect Monitoring

Erin Rice led a review of the methods, initial findings, and next steps for 22 vegetation transects established in the Restoration area. Soils data is not included with this activity. Data collected from piezometer-equipped monitoring wells installed in-line with some of the transects assist in tracking relationships between flow, groundwater, and vegetation growth. Annual measurements show that willows have been resilient during dry periods. Photos from three years of data collection demonstrated the riparian habitat growth. Copies of the summary data for the report can be found on the Program website. The effects of vegetation growth on flood management is a key concern of the Central Valley Flood Protection Board and is a topic the Program is working on with the Board.

Invasive Species Management and Job Creation Project

Julie Rentner and Sharon Weaver shared presentation on the San Joaquin River invasive species management and job creation project, a Reclamation funded effort implemented River Partners, San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust, and The Nature Conservancy. The project is focused on five non-native invasive species: salt cedar, pepper weed, Chinese tallow, arundo, and red sesbania. The eradication effort was developed with input from

an expert panel, which meets on a quarterly basis to share lessons learned. The purpose of the effort is to address the spread of invasives – particularly red sesbania – due to Interim Flows. Project activities have included outreach to build relationships with landowners and the treatment of 281 acres land. Key findings include: red sesbania must have complete biomass removal due to seed pods; and arundo can be treated with cut stump and broadcast treatment. Rentner reported that 2,200 acres of private and public land in the lower portions of the river have been mapped. Perennial pepper weed is the most commonly found invasive plant. Areas prioritized for removal is based on the patch side and proximity to other plant species. Initial findings have shown that red sesbania is best controlled when it is pruned in cold temperatures.

Riparian Habitat Mapping Evaluation

Zooey Diggory provided an update on riparian habitat mapping in the in the Restoration area. Methods to be implemented for the activity included a field accuracy assessment, California Native Plant Society/California Department of Fish and Wildlife Rapid Assessment Protocol, and vegetation distribution and vegetation classification. The survey area was limited to lands that would be inundated by flows up to 8,000 cubic feet per second. The activity sought to update 2002 habitat mapping conducted by DWR. Initial observations of field surveys showed that areas previously mapped as wetlands now have black willow, cottonwood and sandbar willow, for example. Native and non-native plant species are recorded in the maps. They also saw red sesbania mixed with black willow in some areas. The project next steps will be to finish the riparian habitat map and associated report; develop mitigation framework and monitoring methods; and make recommendations to enhance riparian habitat.

Aquatic Sponge Plant Eradication

Patrick Akers provided a briefing on sponge plant eradication near the Restoration area by the California Department of Food and Agriculture. Similar to hyacinth, sponge plant threatens water ways and irrigation canals due to its heavy seed production, long survival and aggressive production. A half meter quadrant can contain 2,000 to 2,500 plants – many times higher than water hyacinth. The plant has been found in varied areas including a section of the Central California Irrigation District Main Canal and some refuge lands. It is assumed to be transported by birds. Akers said the plant can become a more widespread, persistent problem than hyacinth if left unchecked. Eradication can be successful if attached early. Physical and chemical methods are effective. She asked participants to report sightings to Patrick Akers at CDFA

DWR Fine Scale Vegetation Mapping

Ron Melcer provided an update on the medium and fine-scale mapping activities on behalf of the Department of Water Resources Central Valley Flood System Conservation Strategy. The medium-scale mapping is the first seamless, medium-resolution map available. The fine-scale map will be completed in the fall 2013 and include detailed data collection and vegetation attributes. The medium-scale map resolution is 1 to 2 acre (minimum mapping unit) or natural vegetation, fine-scale resolution is a one acre minimum unit. The information will assist in the assessment of existing conditions at a systemwide level for use in conservation planning, opportunities for restoration and invasive weed management. Future efforts include regular map updates, regional updates for planning and projects, modeling, habitat analyses, and data gap evaluation. He completed the presentation with a display of mapping results for Reach 2A, 2B, Reach 4A, and a portion of the Eastside Bypass.

Meeting Adjourned