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

Tuesday, October 7, 2008
California State University, Stanislaus, Turlock, California

Meeting Summary

Attendees

Chris Acree	Revive the San Joaquin
Matt Baquera	Fresno Fly Fishers for Conservation
Steve Chedester	San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority
Ane Deister	SJRRP Restoration Administrator
Gerald Hatler	CA Department of Fish and Game
Tom Lang	Aquarius Aquarium Institute
Abimael Leon	CA Department of Water Resources
Zoltan Matica	CA Department of Water Resources
Scott McBain	McBain & Trush
Jeff McLain	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
David Mooney	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Steve Ottemoeller	Friant Water Users Authority
Monty Schmitt	Natural Resources Defense Council
Stephanie Theis	MWH
Peter Vorster	The Bay Institute
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. To step back and revisit the purpose, scope, and progress to date on the Fisheries Management Plan;
2. Review the approach to defining the limiting factors and get feedback on whether or not the approach follows a logical process
3. Review the Restoration Strategy and the revised Decision Tree and get input on the transparency of the Strategy and if the updates address the feedback provided at the September meeting.

Fisheries Management Plan—Purpose and Scope

The Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) provides a roadmap to adaptively manage restoration and maintenance of naturally reproducing and self-sustaining fish populations under the Restoration Program. The FMP is intended to provide a programmatic strategy for implementation of the Settlement from a fisheries management perspective. The FMP will address spring-run and fall-run Chinook salmon as well as other native fish, such as

steelhead. The geographic scope focuses on the upper San Joaquin River from Friant Dam to the confluence of the Merced River.

The Settlement and documents prepared as part of the Restoration Program form the basis of the FMP. These include the Program Management Plan and various technical memoranda. Input from the public and stakeholders is an important component of the development of the FMP. The Fisheries Management Working Group (FMWG) anticipates sharing preliminary draft sections of the FMP with the Technical Feedback Group as the sections are prepared. The entire FMP will be released in March 2009 with the Draft Program Environmental Impact Statement/Report.

It was noted by an attendee that an expanded geographic scope for the FMP may need to be considered. Limiting the scope to the San Joaquin River above the Merced River confluence may limit consideration of downstream opportunities and constraints to fisheries restoration. The group discussed this topic in detail. It was noted that potential factors downstream of the confluence with the Merced River are considered in the conceptual model.

Based on a question from an attendee, it was noted that specific fisheries restoration actions and the prioritization of these actions will be included in the Fisheries Implementation Plan. The Fisheries Implementation Plan will be based on the FMP and will prepared after a Record of Decision on the Program EIS/R is signed.

Fish Management Plan Progress—Limiting Factors Definitions

Based on comments and input received at the August and September Technical Feedback Group meetings, the FMWG revised the approach to defining the limiting factors. Under the revised approach, a forcing function, the driving force impacting the ecosystem, has been identified for each limiting factor. Limiting factors are stressors resulting from forcing functions that significantly influence the abundance and productivity of the Chinook salmon population. Physical impacts are the physical changes that result from the limiting factor. Biological responses are the biological or fisheries responses to the physical impact. A few examples of limiting factors for adult migration were discussed.

The following feedback was provided by attendees with regard to the revised limiting factors:

- Additional information should be provided to clarify how limiting factors are prioritized.
- Limiting factors might be better characterized as “potential” limiting factors.
- It is not clear how diversions degrade water quality. Additional information should be provided to clarify.
- The “water quality” category should be expanded to indicate that water temperatures are included in the category.

Fish Management Plan Progress—Restoration Strategy and Routing Examples

Jeff McLain provided an overview of the FMP Restoration Strategy. The Restoration Strategy is essentially the fisheries adaptive management strategy. It will guide future fisheries management actions and allows for flexibility and adjustments based on increasing knowledge and changing conditions. The Restoration Strategy is the foundation of the FMP.

The group reviewed the updated adaptive management strategy and the updated Decision Tree for Routing Potential Actions. The group also walked through example routings of actions through the Decision Tree based on the example adult migration limiting factor of inadequate streamflow. Two following actions were routed in the example: (1) low flow channel construction and (2) channel modifications in Reaches 2 and 4 (of the Eastside Bypass). Using the current form of the Decision Tree and associated definitions, both actions were routed through the Decision Tree to an outcome of recommended full implementation. The group discussed how this outcome was slightly different than in the example handout provided at the meeting.

The following feedback was provided by attendees with regard to the Restoration Strategy and routing examples:

- The Restoration Strategy provided at the meeting may be better labeled as a Restoration Strategy process, approach, or Management Strategy as its does not appear to be a complete Restoration Strategy in its current form.
- There is a need for a strategy for fisheries restoration that outlines on-the-ground vision of the river and associated actions. This strategy would focus on what actions would be necessary for fish, and when these actions would need to be taken. An adaptive management program could then be developed to assess and monitor the success of the strategy. However, it was also noted that the on-the-ground vision of the river may be reflected in the Program EIS/R alternatives.
- The following could be added to Decision Node 5: water management opportunities and constraints and potential to resolve multiple objectives or have multiple benefits.
- The roles of the different agencies during project implementation should be better defined.

The following feedback was provided by attendees with regard to the Performance Measures in the Restoration Strategy (Tables 1 and 2):

- The performance measures should be things that can be measured.
- A column to describe certainty may be useful.
- Buffer flows are not likely performance measures. Rather buffer flows should be viewed as an adaptive management tool.

It was noted that the Restoration Strategy section provided at the meeting is only a portion of the overall Restoration Strategy. The remainder of the Restoration Strategy will be discussed and provided at future meetings. The group also discussed their expected approach and content for a Restoration Strategy.

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 November 4 at Cal State Stanislaus. Future meetings will be extended to 4 pm to allow additional time for discussion.

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).