Salmonid Team Meeting Notes

Meeting: July 12, 2006

Item 1. **Team Members**
Team Members in attendance included: Amy Christopherson, Bob Anderson, Bob, Coey, Bill Cox, Bill Hearn, Carolyn Wasem, Charlette Epifano, Charlie Carson, Dick Butler, Jake Mackenzie, Jen Jenkins, John Perry, Kara Heckert, Kate Symonds, Keenan Foster, Marc Kelley, Mike Bierman, Mike Martini, Ralph Locke, Ron Rolleri

Item 2. **Discussion re: Federal Agencies**
At some point it will work into the coalition's agenda: NRCS and NOAA are working together to start the process of the Rapid Watershed Assessment. NOAA, the USFWS and NRCS have a presence in Santa Rosa, allowing access and assistance for this process.

Item 3. **Discussion re: Scope of Work**
NOAA is in the process of hiring a biologist and has put together what they believe the role of the contracted employee will be. NOAA wants to put together a conservation plan that addresses streams in Alexander, Dry Creek and Knights Valley critical to fish. The proposed timeline for completion is 12 months.

There is a need for this biologist to:

1. Review and understand existing information and data
2. Conduct limited field reconnaissance of appropriate streams and habitats
3. Aid in developing BMPs – specific to industries and uses
4. Develop a conservation plan
5. Identify projects that provide maximum benefit to the fish

The geographic focus is Alexander, Dry Creek and Knights Valley. There is a need to limit the geographic extent and number of streams to include in the conservation plan. Otherwise this is a potentially overwhelming process for the limited personnel engaged in the assessement. The streams to be assessed in this conservation plan include: Crocker, Gill, Miller, Gird, Sausal, Maacama, Redwood, Foote, Kellogg, Yellow Jacket, Franz, Crane, Grape, Wine and Dutcher, as well as the mainstem Russian River in the Alexander Valley, and Dry Creek downstream from Warm Springs Dam.

These streams will be assessed in terms of the following six factors that support properly functioning conditions for threatened and endangered salmon and steelhead:

Water Quality
Water Quantity
Extent of Substrate Sedimentation

Quality of Riparian Vegetation
Absence of manmade passage barriers
Channel Complexity (riffle-pool ratio, presence of large woody debris, etc.)

Item 4. **One Option for Regulatory Relief**
The Ultimate Fish Friendly Farming Letter – minimizing "take", there may be an ability as an Agency – to authorize "take" using the letter as the basis for that authorization.

Item 5. **Rapid Watershed Assessment**
Fish & Game believes that each creek referenced, with the exception of Sausal, have completed surveys and or assessments, and accompanying reports. Some of these were done in the early 90's. There would need to be some ground truthing of that data. The data is focused on main stem and major streams. Little upland information has been assessed.

NRCS explained the methodology for Rapid Watershed Assessment. NRCS has a long history of watershed planning. Studies and inventories, data analysis, identification of resource problems are a part of that methodology. Their process has always been consensus driven in making decisions. Typically the process takes a number of years. However, to respond to needs, NRCS has come up with this rapid assessment process. The idea is to take advantage of existing information – gather that information, analyze that data and work in a consensus driven process to help everyone identify the priorities, based upon the stated goals of the community. NRCS will meet with all coalition members to get everyone's ideas and input. They will then assess and provide alternatives for how to best meet the goals of the Coalition. .

WHAT IS IT THAT THIS GROUP WANTS FROM THIS PROCESS?

A) POTENTIALLY - BMPS
B) POTENTIALLY - RESTORATION AND HABITAT ENHANCEMENT FOCUS
C) Understand how to get the community to participate

NOAA thinks that the stream assessment effort would likely start with a small watershed such as Miller Creek with limited land owners and limited focus that would allow identification of a process that will serve as the basis for creating a larger process for the other streams.

NOAA needs to update the DFG database with any other existing land use data that may have been collected by NRCS, RCD, SWRCB, and RWQCB.

How does the coalition update the information?

Different agencies have the data needed to update the information. Those data layers need to be integrated with existing to GIS information.

Item 6: **Urban Water Use and impacts on Salmonids**
A discussion regarding impact of urban water use ensued:

NOAA stated that Dry Creek serves as the pipeline for urban water supply. It is highly unlikely that unless the water users can protect the salmonids, NOAA would support the release of additional volumes of water from behind Warm Springs dam. The flows are already at times too high – for rearing salmonids in Dry Creek. 45 to 50 cfs is a good flow for salmonids, at 110 cfs; the habitat becomes a water slide. The water is cold, which is good, but given the narrow channel; the current velocities are too high. Additional flows required for 25,000 additional acre-feet are a real concern for NOAA.

A representative from the BPU asked, if we restore these other creeks, would that allow us some flexibility on additional water supply down Dry Creek?

NOAA believes that it is dangerous to write off the need for critical habitat designation because we do good elsewhere.

The Sonoma County Water Agency has been discussing the concept of opening the high flow channel in Dry Creek It would be very expensive, but would it be more expensive than the pipeline?

The jurisdictions who rely on the water supply need to understand what NOAA needs in terms of cfs for fish protection? The jurisdictions cannot afford to lose any access to their water either potable and/or reclaimed water.

NOAA and the Water Agency agreed that the pools, at certain cfs become runs, the riffles become flat waters that glide, you loose all friction points – rearing habitat through the summer and fall is diminished. During high flows there are erosion problems in Dry Creek. Dry Creek flow is already higher than what is needed for fish. So releasing additional water during the spring, summer or fall would not enhance fish habitat.

Pumping and filtering of water – do you need filtration that occurs in Dry Creek? Could a pipeline be built that conveyed the water directly to the Russian River? A Water Agency engineer will attend the next meeting to discuss the data.

Item 6: **Need to establish a Urban Water Use Subcommittee**
Several members of the coalition expressed the need to establish a sub-committee to explore the needs of urban water users. The team will be made up of WAC representatives, the Sonoma County Water Agency, NOAA Fisheries and an Ag representative.

Item 7: **Next Meeting**
August the 10th – next meeting 8:00 am at SCWA