Salmonid Coalition
Meeting Notes
Thursday September 21, 2006
Sonoma County Water Agency

Item 1: **Introductions**
In attendance: Al Cadd, Al Nelson, Amy Bolten, Bill Cox, Bill Hearn, Bob Anderson, Brian Johnson, Carolyn Wasem, Colleen Fernald, Charlie Carson, David Lewis, David Smith, Gregg Horton, Joe Dillon, John Perry, Kara Heckert, Karen Rippey, Kathy Hayes, Kennan Foster, Luana Kiger (by phone), Marc Kelley, Mike Ban, Nick Frey, Pete Dayton, Ralph Locke and Ron Rolerri

Item 2: **NRCS - Rapid Watershed Assessment**
NRCS has undertaken a Rapid Watershed Assessment in three sub-basins: Alexander and Dry Creek. and Knights Valleys. Metadata from CDF&G is needed to understand the spatial datasets from CDF&G that form part of the GIS analysis.
To date, NRCS has created several maps that highlight pool assessment with a focus on low quality pools, winery locations, temperature variations (70 degrees +) and cover/canopy information. This initial GIS analysis eliminates areas that are considered "good" quality or above based on the existing GIS data. Based on this analysis the following geographic areas appear to potentially need conservation treatment:

Mill Creek
Crane Creek
Unnamed Creek below Dutcher Creek
Miller Creek
Sulphur Creek
Maacama Creek
Redwood Creek
Franz Creek up to Kellogg and Yellow Jacket

Portions of Crane and Miller Creek also need to be assessed.

Item 3: **NOAA and NRCS Dialogue – Rapid Watershed Assessment**
Working with the Sonoma County Water Agency, Dry Creek Valley Property Owners, RCD and Russian River Property Owners, NRCS will make efforts to access private property as needed for on ground assessment and evaluation of potential effectiveness of conservation practices.

NOAA indicated that they have been proceeding along the lines of addressing the six factors:

1) Quantity of water
2) Quality of water
3) Substrate sedimentation
4) Barriers to passage

5) Quality of riparian vegetation
6) Channel complexity

A substantial amount of data from DFG (Coey data) is available to assess, as well as from other sources. NRCS, NOAA and DFG need to identify criteria for the assessment. Working with Dr. Horton, the Agencies will collaborate and identify the criteria for evaluating the six basic factors.

NOAA is looking through the various surveys and information gathered and will come up with an initial stab at these criteria. NOAA will focus its energy on fish in-stream and the biology associated with habitat, such as complexity.

NOAA would like to see the information regarding temperatures and canopy that NRCS has detailed. That information serves as indicators of habitat complexity. In CDF&G assessment, values from 0-9 were used to evaluate quality. This allows the Agencies to identify specific relationships between low quality variables.

NRCS is basically looking at the uplands to identify a suite of conservation practices that vineyards can use to address resource needs. NRCS is not looking at producing a biological assessment, but rather the conservation practices that can assist willing landowners. Currently, the Agencies are aware of sections of streams where diversions or culverts exist based on CDF&G assessments. EQIP funds can be used to help eligible willing landowners remove such barriers if this practice is a high priority in the local area.

Item 4. **GIS Information**
All GIS information needs to be provided to NRCS. NOAA and DFG committed to sending all their data to NRCS. There are thousands of variables and data points. (Until the criteria are identified and procedures developed, GIS data is not nearly as valuable.)

On an ongoing basis, GIS data needs to be coordinated and updated between the Agencies. The Army Corps has valuable information as well. Bob Anderson provided contact information for securing that data.

After the GIS mapping is complete, the Coalition can begin working with a coordinator so that the appropriate individuals can get out on the ground and conduct further assessments.

Item 5. **Issues Raised and Participant Input**

DFG would like to better understand the temperature variations, including the root causes. In Maacama temperature may be running at 75 degrees – the Agencies need to understand the reasons.

SCWA suggested there might be potential to work this through an existing NOAA model to understand the reasons behind temperatures in various streams. Additionally, some of

those issues are expected to be analyzed and available in the draft COHO Recovery Plan. The goal is to incorporate that plan in this process.

NOAA will come up with a Recovery Plan for steelhead and Chinook as well. NOAA feels that a threats assessment is key to a Recovery Plan. There needs to be an understanding of what is broke and how to fix it. NOAA will need site-specific data to complete the Recovery Plans.

Item 6: **Coalescing and Understanding Existing Data**

This process is familiar to NRCS. On the Klamath, the Resource Conservation Districts in Siskiyou County worked closely with others to provide support and data for the Coho Recovery Plan. NRCS helps identify types of land use practices that private landowners can adopt that will contribute to recovery. A variety of valuable resources exist: Resource Conservation District officials may live in a specific area of impact and be very familiar with the landscape and land use. Farmers and ranchers can give the Coalition a good idea of the historic value of the streams and uplands. How did the land look a hundred years ago? Many have family historic documents. These individuals, working together can answer some key questions.

RCD's viewpoint is that their role will come later when the other State and Federal Agencies have determined what they need. RCD would like to be involved in arranging and participating in field visits. NRCS believes that RCD's participation on field trips would be helpful since they work with the local landowners.

In terms of pool assessments, NOAA will provide its existing data to NRCS and plot that data onto a set a maps. Additionally, NRCS needs to discuss existing CDF&G data with Bob Coey.

Dan Smith has taken all of Bob's data, as well as additional watershed data, and put it into a GIS model. Perhaps Dan can provide that information to NOAA and NRCS. Dan uses the North Coast Watershed Assessment model – so some of the information needed is in that format. Dan will return to the area in November. In the meantime, NOAA can pull the data from Russian River Watershed Integrated Plan.

Item 7: **Introduction of Gregg Horton/Scope of Work**

Dr. Gregg Horton started work with NOAA on September 5th 2006. Most recently Gregg has been working on his PhD at the University of Massachusetts. In the past Gregg has worked with a small population of juvenile salmon in New England. He studied juvenile growth, survival and movement prior to their heading to the Ocean. He also worked for the State of Maine, as a Regional Biologist; focus included habitat and population assessments.

Prior to that received masters from the University of Alaska.

Gregg is getting married later this month. The person he is marrying is a biologist and works for UC Davis Extension and their Coho brood stock program.

Depending on how much of the work is already done, Gregg will have a better sense of the timing of the process. A rough sketch of things:

1) Development of biologically-based criteria
2) Apply criteria that exists and incorporate into a habitat assessment
3) Ground-truthing and applying criteria: first six months
4) End of six month period have a good assessment in place
5) Post-Assessment identify projects to restore and enhance habitat
6) Post-Assessment identify what should be preserved and how it should be preserved
7) Incorporate industry specific BMPs needed to address conservation

NOAA feels that Dr. Horton's efforts will address some issues not addressed in DFG's Russian River Basin Plan. That Russian River Basin Plan can ultimately be incorporated into Dr. Horton's and will certainly contribute to the recovery process. The level of specificity is going to be greater in Dr. Horton's work. By using existing information and the Russian River Basin Plan, NOAA can extend its knowledge and create a comprehensive plan that will lead to recovery and de-listing of the species. One key element missing in the Russian River Plan is addressing the requirements of the Endangered Species Act and the implications of critical habitat.

Item 9: **Incorporating Dr. Adina Merenlender's Data**

At the last Ag subcommittee meeting Dr. Merenlender presented a proposal for measuring stream flow in the Russian River Watershed. The intent is to gather data that will assist in understanding if there is a balance between water use and water storage.

Her proposal includes:

- Calculating water in a small watershed, with several gauging stations, to better understand factors that would be effective in designing off stream storage
- Verification of flow data and evaluate against predicted data
- Exploring relationship between watershed size and flows
- Exploring relationship between differing channels and in-stream flows
- Exploring hydrograph variations relative to reservoirs and reservoir placement

NOAA thinks that this information will he helpful in completing the Coalition's work..

Trout Unlimited is working with the State water rights group to potentially develop programs for permits and off-stream storage. This program will focus on the regulatory permitting and financial side. Unlike many other things having to do with water law, this subject unites regulatory Agencies, landowners and Trout Unlimited. Dr. Merenlender's data will be helpful to this effort as well.

Item 10: **Update on Urban Subcommittee**

Viticulture and Water Demand -
As a follow up to discussions held in the Urban Subcommittee meeting, viticulture representatives briefly discussed water demands relative to vineyards. Generally, 50 acre-feet of water are required for irrigating 100 acres of vineyards. There are some variations in water use depending upon soils, type of reservoir, slope, etc.

A unit of the Ag subcommittee is looking at best management practices that will conserve water used on vineyards. A unit of the urban subcommittee is looking at best management practices that will conserve water used in existing and future development.

Dry Creek and Conservation Needs -
At the last urban subcommittee meeting, NOAA stated that Dr. Horton couldn't address issues in Dry Creek. It is likely that the WAC or the SCWA will fund a geomorphologist to work with the Coalition. There are times in the year where water is coming down dry creek too fast for Coho to survive. A geomorphologist can help the group understand what can be done to address this.

The Water Advisory Committee is aware that domestic water supply is a fish issue. They understand that the communities, to meet general plans, want additional water to be released. The Coalition would like to see a coordinated effort between homebuilders, commercial builders and jurisdictions in determining BMPs for the development industry. The conservation measures they implement must address fish needs. The biggest area that Petaluma will focus on: recycled water and conservation.

Item 12: **Update on Conservation Projects**

Alexander and Dry Creek Valleys property owners will assist in developing a list of projects. Projects discussed included two on the Russian River and one on the southern end of Dry Creek.

Project 1: 1-2 miles above Geyserville. The project is in the $50,000 - $100,000 to repair range. (Ray Duncan)

Project 2: Pratti Ranch owns a good percentage of the river and the banks. This is a larger project.

Project 3: Porter Creek is a year round stream with the classic problem of a washout, filled in during the summer and washed down stream in the winter. There are literally hundreds like this that are not directly related to Ag activities.

RCD has a grants database and would like to be a part of the conservation process. RCD will work with the Coalition to prioritize and inventory activities.

Item 13: **Discussion of General Concerns**

Syar Industries expressed a concern relative to a phenomenon going on along the Russian River. In 1986 the gauging station in Healdsburg registered 73,000 cfs. In 2006, it registered 50,000 cfs, and that particular event raised the water ½ foot below the street level. In the past Syar Industries has taken a particular extraction out of the bar: there is a crusting at this location. Because of the buildup of gravel there is a heightened potential for flooding.

Syar just completed a process with the County. They hired Entrex to evaluate the extraction. That evaluation is in compliance with the EIR, EIS, NOAA, etc. At the very last day there was an appeal filed at the Regional Board challenging compliance. This challenge highlights the need to consider this process and its relationship to permitting for gravel extraction.

Several farmers that own property along the River noted that the River fills with gravel and it starts to meander. It is not helpful when the River meanders and takes vineyards and property. They further indicated that the Coalition needed to support the removal of some aggregate.

Item 14: **Announcements**

Colleen Fernald invited everyone to a seminar on the Russian River to be held October 15th from 1pm to 7pm at the Sebastopol Community Center.

Item 15: **Next Meetings**

Next Ag Subcommittee – October 12th, 9 am
Next Urban Subcommittee – October 13th, 12 Noon
Next Coalition Meeting – November 2nd, 8 am