

TRINITY RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL

Mission Statement

To protect, enhance, restore and revitalize the watershed through collaborative efforts that leverage external resources, work toward common goals, educate and engage community stakeholders, address natural resource issues, and support healthy ecosystems for future generations.

Meeting Notes

Tuesday December 10, 2019

TCRCD Conference Room, #20 Horseshoe Lane, Suite 2B, Weaverville

9:03 am – 11:05 pm

In attendance:

Amelia Fleitz (TCRCD); Josh Smith (WRTC); David Schmerge (USFS); Marie Petersen (Down River Consulting); Chance Callahan (Down River Consulting); Bob Morris (SAFE); Cindy Buxton (WRTC); Sandra Perez (5Cs); Leslie Hubbard (Trinity County); Tracy McFadin (TCRCD); Mike Dixon (TRRP); James Lee (TRRP/HVT); Sara Kelly (TRRP); Zack Pattele (WRTC/WSP); Logan McDiffit (WRTC/WSP); Emma Held (WSP); Nadia Lynn (WSP); Emma Sevier (WSP); Charlie Holthaus (TCRCD); Andy Hill (CDFW); Kyle DeJulio (Yurok Tribe).

Meeting Called to Order at 9:03 am.

1. Introductions

2. Additions/Changes

Welcome all, Mike Dixon announced that James Lee will be the new Science Coordinator for the Trinity River Restoration Program (TRRP) starting in January 2020. Josh Smith introduced the two Watershed Stewards Program (WSP) members, Zack and Logan, that will be spending time with the Watershed Research and Training Center (WRTC) and are here today with their WSP Crew leaders from Fortuna.

3. Set 2020 Schedule and Hosting Responsibilities

Josh: March 10th (WRTC)

Mike: September 8th (TRRP)

Amelia: December 8th (TCRCD)

4. Trinity County Cannabis Program CEQA Update – Leslie Hubbard

Leslie announced that there will be a continuation of the board meeting tomorrow, at 2pm, for the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). She continued to state there will be back and forth made between public and Trinity County Board of Supervisors (BOS) at this meeting, and the Planning Commission will be there to oversee the process. The formal public comment period for the DEIR ended in July of 2019. Leslie hopes that the board members and Planning Commission will give direction to the Trinity County planning staff to recirculate or move forward with the current DEIR. Leslie hopes they will have the document certified in the late spring of 2020.

5. Program work/updates/news

- **Hoopa Tribe**
- **Trinity County Fish and Game Commission (TCFG)**
- Trinity County Board of Supervisors – *no representative in attendance*
- **Watershed Center**
- **5 Counties Salmonid Conservation Program (5 C's)**

- **United States Forest Service (USFS)**
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) – *no representative in attendance*
- **Down River Consulting**
- **Yurok Tribe**
- **California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)**
- **Trinity County RCD (TCRCD)**
- **Trinity River Restoration Program (TRRP)**
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM) – *no representative in attendance*
- **Safe Alternatives for our Forest Environment (SAFE)**
- **Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI)**
- **Trinity County Collaborative Group (TCCG)**

Hoopa Tribe – James Lee

James stated that the Mill Creek project in the valley is completed and there is high intrinsic potential for coho. The 1964 flood channelized low habitat from the Trinity Alps Wilderness to the Trinity River (Hoopa area) which improved the growth of wood and plants. After the 1976 flood, there is a low suitability for coho. The grant from FRGP reconnected the stream to the floodplain over ½ a mile. James states that it is an easy to visit site and if anyone wants to see it let him know. There was a group interest in a field trip and coordination will be evaluated at a later date. James has aerial images from 1964, showing poor habitat quality due to stream channelization and levels protecting pastures and agricultural fields that Army Corp had done. No houses at risk (Trinity River can back fill that area). For formal monitoring, a daily routine should be created. Few features moved due to high water year. Aerial photography needed every once in a while. James states there are not active projects, the Hoopa Tribe Fisheries is looking into Supply Creek. There is not current funding, but they are looking to fund rearing of Coho in the watershed to rebuild the population.

Trinity County Fish and Game Commission – James Lee

A meeting was held last week, proposing that the Sites Reservoir open fly water below Lewiston on January 1st, instead of April, to increase opportunities. A grant subcommittee being developed for next year, regarding hunting/fishing violation fines. Anyone welcome to have a proposal submitted, to help hunting and/or fishing opportunities and the fish and wildlife at large in the county. There are still several open seats, specifically, Donna Rupp’s restoration seat, for the FG Advisory Commission. Regarding webpage, talk to James Lee. Starting January, and every other odd month following, on the 2nd Wednesday, meet at the library at 7pm, and there is mileage reimbursement for those traveling from far away.

Watershed Center – Cindy Buxton and Josh Smith

Cindy updated that the stream flow monitoring and pressure transducers were pulled on October 29th. Her crew will be getting some spot measurements today. As for flow in Hayfork and Weaverville, all temperature logs were collected except for one on South Fork. Cindy still needs to clean and process the data.

Josh stated that riparian pollinator planting in Hayfork Creek has occurred. Regarding the Watershed Stewards Program it is job training for fisheries and watershed work. The WSP members will be exposed to community wetland planting, a South Fork Trinity River kayak surveys, and stream flow/culvert surveys. The fall run chinook population was low at 40 to 50 redds this year.

Josh updated that there was OHV trail restoration in upper South Fork and erosion was fixed on some sections of trail with Redding Trail Alliance’s mini dozer along the Snow Gap Trail. Post project monitoring on LWD on Heliwood project continues, 300 pieces were placed and more than 100 are remaining in the reach. Many

moved in and above Hyampom reaches and have recruited many trees on them. The Indian Valley project has been stalled. Trinity River Restoration Program funded Lidar for parts of South Fork (Hayfork Creek, Hyampom, and Indian Valley). The 5 C's are stalled with Brown's Creek. Josh stated he is working to get funding for the Salt Creek project to raise the channel for water reconnection. Regarding the Grow Reclamation with the IERC, it was a multiagency effort to clean the sites. This season, 19 complexes have been cleared, 35 sites, 2,400 pounds of trash, 21 miles of pipe, 191 pounds of pesticide, and 1,800 pounds of fertilizer. The majority of the sites are in the Trinity River watershed. IERC has been working hard to pursue more funding to continue this work, they are also looking to expand into other watersheds.

5 Counties Salmonid Conservation Program (5 C's) – Sandra Perez

5C's are still waiting for the last contamination results with the United States Forest Service before they can designate fish passage at Sydney Gulch. For the Lee Fong section of Sydney Gulch design alternative 4 was selected there will be a public meeting in January for February. For the East Weaver water conservation plan for the ditch to butler power the plan is 97% complete. The restoration design for the dam on East Weaver is still in development. Regarding the water liability project in Browns Creek, 5C's still needs to nail down the details for the landowner requirements. The Manzanita Creek Barriers project is put on hold until possibly next season. Mark stated there is an issue with blowing up the Manzanita Dam and 3 alternatives to not blow it up. The question is what to do with the concrete post-project: (1) fly it out, (2) pack it out, (3) blow it up and leave it. Pre 1914, the water right did not exist at the water 3 miles from the highway mark. The dam was put in in 1930, for Big Bar Ranger Station, the dam was originally 9 feet tall and silted in, adult steelhead can sometimes get past it. For Sharber Creek, weather permitting 5C's will be able to move forward to change the diversion for water conservation.

United States Forest Service – David Schmerge

Regarding the National Environmental Policy Act, the Dubakella decision is expected soon, a hold-up due to archeology surveys waned for the temporary roads. It is up for decision to implement fuels treatment sooner, then timber harvest later. The Trinity Alps RX decision target is set for March of 2020, but no clear update. The Pilot project, a TCCG proposed project, has a draft EA target set for May of 2020. There is a concern with personnel turnover, for Randi Paris is in Arizona on a detail as a District Ranger. Tom Hall will be taking a job in Washington DC and Bill Brock the fisheries biologist is retiring at the end of the year. The Weaverville Community Forest Prescribed Fire Project will be managed out of the Weaverville office as a categorical exclusion, scoping will start soon. Joe is targeting for March 2020, might move to October 2020 for wildlife/arch to meet the target. When it comes to Burnt Ranch, nothing is new. Joe's Corral Bottom project hasn't formed a National Environmental Policy Act team yet. Dan Ostmann is coordinating a fuels reduction project in and around Hyampom. Pettijohn litigation is occurring right now, not sure when that will be resolved. For watershed restoration – small NEPA projects for headwaters of the South Fork Trinity River. Cynthia Tarwater (TCRCD) will treat the sediment sites. A forest engineer is in place. David's priority is to work in watersheds that need minimal work and get one sub-watershed to get unimpaired by TMDL off the list. For Shell Mountain Creek, the sediment impairment is close to being fixed. It is temporarily impaired due to it being unnaturally warm and shading does not reflect natural conditions. The cattle allotment is too heavy grazed, but no NEPA action is needed for exclosure. USFS planted willows fall and spring, as well planning to install a cattle exclosure for a 1 mile long stretch.

Down River Consulting – Marie Petersen

Marie asked when the 5 C's roads handbook was adopted by Trinity County, it was adopted in the early 2000s, the handbook is in the revision process right now.

Marie states that Lake Road in JC is bad and could use treatment, it is an important fire escape route is in need of maintenance, the ditch relief culvert needs replaced due to severe scouring, the inlets plugged and scoured from sides. Thus the culvert is no longer functioning, which is creating instability for the road. The road is likely to fail and it is sluffing into the Trinity River. The ditch needs reinforcement to disperse future erosion. The lake/stream bed alteration permit is in progress. One property owner cannot absorb all the costs of this repair, if you know of any other ways to help get this repaired please talk to Marie. Private landowners would have to bring to County standards first, in order for County maintenance to chip in. The community road association isn't completely functional, the East Branch of East Weaver Road association doesn't work, but Little Brown Creek works. Need help and feedback. Are the 5 C's interested? Bob Morris when on to discuss how he did a lot of work on Little Brown Creek 45 years ago, the road is 1 ¼ mile from Sierra Pacific Industries to private road, and has 13 culverts. Bob stated his road association was established in 1979 and an annual meeting takes place in the summer. Old business/new business/offices/no major business. Annually asphalt gratings were put in on the road and is chip sealed, which replaced work parties twice a year to maintain the road. The Little Brown's Creek road association has also used cold patch asphalt in the last year. It's not formalized, but put on the listing that it worked well, the cost is \$150 to \$400 a year per property. Bob states that this effort has reduced sediment load to Little Brown Creek.

Yurok Tribe – Kyle DeJulio

Kyle stated that they are working on Indian Creek connectivity and the final design is with the Bureau of Land Management (NEPA/CEQA). Construction will be mid to late summer 2020. The Junction City property was bought on Sky Ranch Road and the design for that section is at 60%.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife – Andy Hill

Andy stated that it is the the last spawn day. Spring returns to hatch normal or above average. Fall had the lowest numbers, down by 15 to 20. Additionally, the fall season was low on Chinook Redds. The 90-day listing for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for Spring Chinook has been submitted.

Trinity County RCD – Amelia Fleitz

Amelia is working to get USFS and CSD on same page for the West Weaver Diversion enhancement, which would abandon sections of the Moon Lee Ditch. The Little Brown Creek 5Cs is working to get the powerlines out of the riparian corridor and in the BLM section of Little Browns Creek Amelia is looking to plan a harvest that will be followed by fuels reduction.

Amelia reported on Cynthia's funded road projects: Grass Valley Creek (ongoing), SFTR road assessment and SFTR Phase 1 Implementation (completed), Browns Decomms (holding for Phase 3), 2017 fires Helena-Buck (completed), Gemmill Decomms (ongoing), and Gemmill Area Upgrades (ongoing). The pending road projects from Cynthia are the Gemmill Upgrades which begin January 1st. New road project proposals from Cynthia are the Headwaters Project (unknown) and the Kettenpom/Zenia/South Trinity UFD (agreement in 2020). Charlie has a grant from the State Waterboard to prevent extensive fire to prevent additional sediment erosion into the Trinity River, Douglas City, Lewiston, and Junction City. In Junction City, Cal Fire inmate crews will work on Sky Ranch, Dutch Creek, and Powerhouse Rd to finish up the project. Charlie needs to track roadside starts through the life of the project, so if you hear of any in that area please report them to him. So far there were three power lines down within the fuel break area that did not start fires.

Sara Kelly discussed some of the environmental education/hydrology outreach materials she and Elizabeth Sandoval are working on and other TRRP projects including a calendar, anadromous fish book mark, salmon festival, and many other events.

Trinity River Restoration Program – Mike Dixon

A fire year contract is expiring and we are using residual funds to acquire Lidar data. The Lidar funds are driven by Carr Fire to Weaverville Creek, Browns Creek, and Trinity Alps. Funding to target South Fork: Hayfork Valley, stream corridors, South Fork, Hyampom, etc. Data will be available for baseline information for road improvement by the end of February 2020. TRRP needs to reinstate with National Marine Fisheries Service next year and have open consultation with the Bureau of Land Management, USFWS Arcata, and United States Forest Service letters (programmatic ESA coverage and public land or CAFE funding). He hopes to have the Biological Opinion done by the next calendar year.

On the ground work, Chapman Phase A will be done in a few weeks, replanting overtime, BLM and private level, and channelized stretch to reconnect floodplain. It is the largest mainstream restoration to date for the program. Mike is looking to put more money to process based restoration. There is no heavy-handed engineering built there and will look different. Potential for a future field tour. Fonsi Dutch Creek will be finished anytime, this site has challenging access, but is an awesome project. There is mine sediment, but none on top. The USFS deal with objection on the draft will be constructed next summer.

Regarding watershed restoration grant, need deputy commissioner briefing. FOA maybe in January? Central Valley Improvement Act has more scrutiny and unpopular right now. It is moving forward, but at a slower rate. Have Mike share with Amelia to share with the group.

TMC voted in favor to continue to pursue to get a trigger-based hydrograph release, based on tributary flows (biologic, geomorphic-based), rather than a ROD release. For gravel and restoration modifications, looking at winter and spring flow variability, as well as seeing if it behaves like a natural river.

Safe Alternatives for our Forest Environment (SAFE) – Bob Morris

The 40th celebration will be held in February. A few members will be attending the DEIR meeting. Negotiations with CalTrans about spraying along roadsides will restart in January.

Sierra Pacific Industries – Keith Greenwood

No update.

Trinity County Collaborative Group – Bob Morris

A meeting will be held on the third Friday of January in Weaverville. Tom Hall is moving on. Six Rivers 1st 48 field visit will be coming soon. The logging done by Gary Warner looked great and the cleanup will take years. It is a good outcome for the mill. There is roadside fuels reduction so there can be slow fire spread. Shaded fuel break reduces brush regrowth, creates economical jobs, and merchantable timber. The environmental review with the Shasta Trinity National Forest is taking over five years. Pilot for the United States Forest Service is stuck in NEPA. Dan Dill passed away.

6. Next Meeting

March 10th, 10:00 am, @TRRP Conference Room

Meeting Adjourned at 11:05 am.