

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 April 24, 2018

TCRCD Conference Room, 10:00 am – 12:15 pm

In attendance: Galen Anderson (USFS), Sandra Perez(5Cs), Cindy Buxton (5cs and WRTC), Josh Smith (WRTC), Donna Rupp and Tracy McFadin (TCRCD), Noah Zohbe (Down River Consulting), Andy Hill and Kate Blanchard (CDFW), Eric Wiseman and Kyle DeJulio (Yurok Tribe and TRRP), Bob Morris (SAFE), Bobbi Chadwick (TCBOS), Bryan McFadin (NCRWQCB), Mike Dixon (TRRP), and Tom Waltz (SPI).

1. Introductions.

2. Grading Ordinance: Bobbi Chadwick has been removed from the committee; Karl Fisher (private citizen and past TCBOS) is now assigned to work on it with Leslie Hubbard (Trinity County Planning Department.) and Rick Tippet (Trinity County Transportation Department). Donna will check with Leslie to see if the Council can get an update and Donna will email it to the group.

3. Trinity River Watershed Streamflow Monitoring update – Bryan McFadin, NCRWQCB

- During Spring 2016 started monitoring stream flows in some tributaries in coordination with USFS, WRTC, and CDFW. Goal is to figure out flow conditions, what streams are drying up, and gather information that could inform management and conservation. Thirty-three locations were monitored every 4 to 6 weeks between April and November in 2016 and 2017. Attempt to bracket water use in space and time, above and below withdrawals, and across the growing season.
- In 2016 four gauges were installed, in 2017, nine gauges were installed. Locations included Hayfork, Browns, Reading, Indian and Weaver Creeks.
- There are many ways to use data to track water levels and usage. USGS site gage information can be used to extrapolate flow data. Ratio of precipitation to drainage area can be used to translate ungaged site flows and historic trends. Water rights records and EWRIMS database were also used. Cannabis farm mapping against reported water use through regulatory program to compare what was mapped as cultivated area and what was reported usage. Information can be extrapolated to other grows.
- Some anomalies or dramatic drops in flow were related to diversions (big gulps vs. sips). Municipal diversions were the biggest impacts seen for Weaver Creek and Big Creek. Also irrigated pastures were big gulps. WCSD has water right, legal right to draw from Weaver Creek even though they can also draw from the Trinity River.
- Donna commented that the West Weaver Creek WCSD diversion can be made more efficient and piping the ditch is being looked at. Also the 5Cs has received funding for the East Weaver Creek dam removal, which will extend fisheries habitat.
- Bryan said he will be working on a final report and it will be circulated for comment.

- This week he worked with WRTC and installed gages on Salt, Big, and Browns Creeks. Also W. Weaver gage will be installed with 5Cs and TCRCD today.
- WRTC is working on storage tank/forbearance approach, and trying to determine critical thresholds. Josh said recent report on low flow thresholds showed that low dissolved oxygen levels are also an issue for juvenile fish when pools become disconnected. WRTC is doing a pilot project, tracking Browns Creek. Want to be able to let people know when flows get to critical levels for fish survivability. It is some people's only water source, but it is the "big gulps" that are a problem, helping to develop storage options to keep more water in the creek when it is critical. The gaging stations will help inform.

4. Watershed Restoration Gap Analysis project:

- Update by Donna. Identified several hundred projects that have been completed in the Trinity River Watershed since 2000, reviewing agency information and online databases. Shared a handout and overhead slides. Using GIS to map restoration work by subwatershed. Donna requested input on how to best display and sort the data. Multiple maps will be produced displaying completed projects, information about each project will be linked, and analyzed using data from public resources including: CA Areas of Conservation Emphasis available online (see handout); and Shasta-Trinity NF Climate Vulnerability Assessment.
- Pulling data together to help focus priorities into the future, identify connectivity, areas still needing work, etc. Climate change research has been done and can inform management.
- Discussion: Kyle brought up the USFS, Nature Conservancy Beaver Restoration Assessment Tool (BRAT) Model can be used to help assess the potential for using beaver as a stream conservation and restoration agent. He feels it is important to find flat areas for flooding for ground water recharge in Trinity Co. floodplain reconnection is important. Josh mentioned that existing infrastructure can be a problem on agricultural lands if using flooding. He also said that Eli has lots of data and data sources – Donna should check with him. Bryan mentioned that alfalfa fields are not incompatible with recharge, ex. Scott Valley. Bobbi said farmers are against beaver, other methods are available, every year is different, how do you predict when and how much water to store? Tom said timing issue for recharge, how soon do you know what needs to be done that year? Kyle said March/April are historic, Josh said it is site specific. Bobbi said during critical dry years, can endangered salmon species be moved to suitable habitat? Barker Valley example given. General discussion about fish rescues and the controversy and logistics around them.
- Bryan said he is developing a regression model to explain flow expected based on snow pack and should have final report available soon, drafted in 2016.
- The Watershed Council website will host a library with links to reports and data as part of the WaterSmart project.

5. Water conservation efforts

- A public workshop is being collaboratively planned by the RCD, 5Cs and WRTC, June 2 is the tentative date.
- RCD is continuing the Little Browns Creek water conservation planning project, organizing neighborhood and doing outreach.

6. TRRP Watershed Implementation Grant Funding- Process issues are being worked on. Comment made that it would be beneficial for grant applicants to hear the TMC review process during their meeting, even if grant applicant can't participate in the discussion. It would be helpful if there were a mechanism for proposal proponents to answer technical or clarification questions during the review process. Also, how much leveraging the proposed projects provide should be considered, and whether or not the project is scalable.

7. Reports:

- Yurok Tribe (Eric and Kyle)-
 1. Yurok Tribe awarded BLM Clear Creek Phase III Design Contract, construction planned for 2019, large-scale project in the valley.
 2. Klamath River Dam Removal Project
 3. Upper Indian Creek Project with BLM
 4. TRRP funded project for Restoring Surface Flow
 5. Heli-wood Project in the S. Fork Trinity in permitting phase, in partnership with USFS and WRTC.
 6. Monitoring Trinity River mainstem
 7. Water Call, winter flow variability, Humboldt County and downstream users
 8. Habitat Surveys
- USFS (Galen)-
 1. Key Watershed Identification Project- Shell Mountain Creek Watershed
 2. TCCG Roads and Plantations Pilot Project
 3. Burnt Ranch Fire Resiliency Community Project
 4. Trinity Alps Prescribed Fire/Fuels Project on hold
 5. A small NEPA/ID project team meets once per month and are looking for small restoration project ideas
- Watershed Research Training Center (Josh)-
 1. Browns Creek Project- water conservation implementation on private lands
 2. Old Mill Site on Hayfork and Salt Creeks Project trying to raise stream surface to reconnect to ground water
 3. Discussion about USFS Region 6 Resurrection Creek Project in Oregon (Paul Powers) as an example of interesting project to increase ground water storage.
- TRRP (Mike)-
 1. No mainstem construction projects this year.
 2. Watershed Implementation Grant Opportunity approved five of seven projects proposed this year.
 3. Will be dredging Upper Hamilton Ponds this year (last time was 2007). Will coordinate with the public for DG collection.
 4. Mainstem Trinity River Draft NEPA for Dutch Creek Restoration Project for functional floodplain creation (on USFS managed land) – possible construction in 2019.
 5. Smaller projects in Junction City Area
- SAFE (Bob)-
 1. County cannabis issue work
 2. Huffman's Public Lands Bill- includes roadside fuel breaks
 3. North Coast Env. Center received a State Water Board grant to cleanup up the old office site that burned in Eureka,

4. Sponsoring a May 3 Public Workshop on cannabis growing method will be held in Hayfork.
- TC Board of Supervisors (Bobbi)-
 1. Asked about Helena Fire Area Restoration activities. BLM timber salvage, USFS BAER Connor Creek erosion control and stabilization project being implemented by RCD.
 - Down River Consulting (Noah)-
 1. Working on permit registrations for growers.
 2. Now have staff with Rainwater Catchment Certification available for consultation.
 3. Discussed Wild and Scenic River designation impact on ability to draw water from the mainstem of Trinity River and tributaries. Because of the designation, water can't be taken from the Trinity for commercial use, but it can be taken from the tribs – which can and do run dry from this practice.
 - CDFW (Kate)-
 1. Working on State Water Board's cannabis policy clause for "Local Cooperative Solutions" for landowners. There is an interest in forbearance waiver by landowners in Indian Creek area.
 - 5Cs (Cindy)-
 1. Little Browns Creek Survey work for RCD planning project under TPUD power lines where creek captured road (by Roundy Road).
 2. TRRP funded East Weaver Creek Dam removal project implementation.
 - TCRCO (Donna)-
 1. Suggested that Trinity Journal letters to the editor regarding water conservation could help to raise awareness.
 - *(No one present to report for Hoopa Tribe, TC Fish and Game Commission, NRCS and BLM).*

Adjourned at 12:15 pm.

Next Meeting: September 25, 2018 at 10 am.