

Tulare Lake Basin Working Group  
October 29, 2010  
NRCS – 3530 W. Orchard Ct., Visalia  
1:00 – 4:30 p.m.  
Meeting Summary

1. **Welcome and self introductions**

2. **Review of TBWP's Conservation Vision document and 2007 – 2009 Annual Report**  
(attachment: "TBWP Conservation Vision 072110" and "TBWP 2007 to 2009 Annual Report 081810") (Johanna Kamansky)

Johanna Kamansky reviewed the Conservation Vision and Annual Report for TLBWG attendees. This annual report covers two years to capture important TBWP work but will be annual henceforth. The Conservation Vision will remain in electronic for now in the interest of reducing paper usage and in anticipation of further tweaking.

3. **Review of TBWP 2011 – 2014 Strategic Plan for input by TLBWG participants**  
(attachment: "Strategic Plan") (Johanna Kamansky)

The TBWP team, board, advisors and CSG have put together a three -year strategic plan for TBWP including goals, needed and available resources, etc. The mission and vision statements have been updated. Johanna reviewed the Goals/Outcomes section in detail. TBWP is moving towards developing a product (plan) that can be edited, endorsed and incorporated by other (particularly larger) organizations. The group will be meeting in next few weeks to further develop details regarding the strategic plan. TLBWG participant feedback can be sent to Jo – [bigtreesmarketing@gmail.com](mailto:bigtreesmarketing@gmail.com) or Carole [ccombs@thegrid.net](mailto:ccombs@thegrid.net).

4. **Overview and results-to-date of Southern Sierra Partnership (Susan Antenen)**

Susan Antenen gave a power point entitled, "Cooperative Conservation and Climate adaptation in the Southern Sierra Nevada and Tehachapi Mountain." Southern Sierra Partnership partners include: Audubon; The Nature Conservancy; Sequoia Riverlands Trust; Sierra Business Council; and the Conservation Biology Institute. The planning area stretches from Route 99 in the west to the San Joaquin River in the north to the Pacific Crest in the east and the Tehachapi/Mojave line in the south. A recent study characterizes the biodiversity, land use patterns, major threats and effects of climate change for the region and offers recommendations on how to incorporate climate change into planning. Susan Antenen suggests that there is great potential for combining SSP and TBWP efforts. The SSP is developing a data sharing website: [www.databasin.org](http://www.databasin.org).

5. **CSG legislative update (Tasha Newman, John McCaull)**

1. A two year legislative cycle just ended. Two bills passed and were approved by the governor : 1) A.B. 2376 (Huffman) "DFG reform bill" requires the Natural Resources Secretary to convene a committee to come up with a strategic vision for DFG and State Parks It also provides opportunities for a stakeholder advisory group to be created and participate. Discussion is ongoing as to how groups will come together, who will be involved, etc. CSG is working to make

sure regional opinions are represented. CSG will continue to apprise us of how this develops. The Strategic vision due July 1, 2012. 2) S.B. 1142 (Wiggins) creates a new account at the Department of Conservation (DOC) – which acts as a placeholder for what may someday be the DOC State-wide Watershed Program.

2. Water Bond: The Water Bond has been put on hold until 2012. In the coming year, one of three scenarios will likely play out: a) the bond will stay as it is (unlikely); 2) the legislature will tweak the current bond or write a new legislative bond; 3) a new measure will be done by initiative, which may not be restricted to water.

3. State Budget: It was a tough budget year but natural resources did okay. DFG and Williamson Act both experienced cuts. Bond funds are going towards IRWM and other key environmental programs.

4. CSG is working on Prop. 21 (vehicle license fee to fund state parks; it would provide funding for DFG land management and to statewide conservancies) – not sure of passage.

**6. Discussion of proposed Williamson Act legislation; local plans and sentiments (John McCaull, CSG – lead)**

The state support for the subvention payments (reimbursement for a portion of lost property tax share) has been cut. Until now subvention funds were unrestricted, general fund money. Tulare County took in just over \$900k this year (down from a one-time high of \$3.4 million). John does not think state will refund the subvention program but there are alternatives.

- A.B. 2530 is compromise legislation regarding the Williamson Act. Williamson Act contracts are rolling ten- year contracts. There is a taxable value to the ten-year time frame. A.B. 2530 offers to counties the option to reduce the term of contracts by one year. In doing so, there will be a 10% increase in property tax value. If reduction happens, property would be reassessed and landowners would pay an additional charge up front. In essence, farmers pay 10% to get 90% of tax savings. Some counties think that this is too complex and not enough money.
- A second option is for counties to fund themselves. Sonoma County is developing a Williamson Act task force. Are there other land conservation dollars that could come into the program at a local level? CSG is working at the state level, but a local conversation needs to happen as well. A first step would be to do the numbers – how much will this actually cost the county? Soapy Mulholland commented that counties only keep something like 11 cents/dollar in property tax. Craig Knudsen explained that about half of the Williamson Act properties entered the Williamson Act prior to Prop. 13, which means that counties are actually making more money off of them.

**7. Department of Conservation Watershed Coordinator applications**

Watershed coordinator update: upon consultation with Tulare Basin IRWM groups, the TBWP submitted a \$300,000 application to the DOC statewide Watershed Coordinator Program for the Tulare Lakes- Buena Vista Lakes HUC. The candidate for the position would act as a resource to

the Tulare Basin regional and sub-regional IRWM groups for integrated natural resource management, which is the goal of the DOC Watershed Program. NRCS will fund Sarah Campe to assist the Coordinator in 2011. Grant recipients will be announced at end of December/early January, and the program would begin in April. Carole can send out the eight proposed objectives for the Tulare Basin position included in the application to anyone interested.

Sarge Green explained that California Water Institute also submitted an application on behalf of Westside RCD. CWI and the Westside RCD's application covers the "white areas" – areas not covered by IRWM groups - especially Arroyo Pasajero (where flooding poses a threat to CA Aqueduct) and Panoche/Silver Creek (which contributes selenium to valley floor).

Carole reported that she attended the October 6 Summit on Statewide Watershed-based Integrated Natural Resource Management convened by Natural Resources Secretary Lester Snow. She provided copies of a particularly useful handout (*attachment: CA Watershed Prog*) from that meeting which defines the watershed approach as follows: "Watershed management or use of a watershed approach to natural resource management, is a process of creating, integrating and implementing policies, plans, programs, projects and other management actions that sustain or enhance the watershed functions needed to provide the desired goods, services, and values needed by society. The approach combines core components of hydrology, biology, geology, and socio-economic needs. Carole suggested that this is the over-arching, integrated approach that is needed for Tulare Basin regional land and water planning and project collaboration and implementation, including efforts by the IRWM groups, TBWP, SSP, San Joaquin River Partnership, proposed San Joaquin Valley Greenprint, and others.

**8. Presentation on a basin recharge project for upland and waterfowl habitat with feedback from TLBWG. (Dale Brogan, Delano-Earlimart ID General Manager)**

The Delano Earlimart Irrigation District (DEID) is over 56,000 acres of intensively irrigated agriculture in the southern part of Tulare County and the northern part of Kern. An 80-acre area, "Turnipseed Basin" was developed for groundwater recharge in 1993. Dale wants to expand the banking project onto an adjacent 80 acres and build recovery and monitoring wells. DEID received a grant from the Bureau of Reclamation to develop the property for groundwater banking but would like to also create wildlife habitat/hunting grounds. DEID can do the engineering but needs help with wildlife habitat design (e.g. various water depths, upland habitat creation, vegetation, etc.) -- i.e. DEID needs expertise and funding for this portion of the project.

TLBWG feedback: Visit the BLM Atwell Island Project and get a tour from Steve Laymon, BLM Atwell Island Project Manager; talk with Elizabeth Palmer (NRCS Southern Wetland Reserve Program Team Leader) regarding the NRCS Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) as a potential funding source ; talk to David Hyatt with the Bureau of Reclamation in Fresno; consider an application for CVPIA funding.

Action items: Dale will visit Steve Laymon at Atwell Island and get in touch with John Shelton about other options. TBWP and other organizations are available to help, including writing letters of support.

## **9. Disadvantaged community needs for open space and recreation and ways TLBWG members can help (Paul Boyer, Self Help Enterprises)**

Areas that need open space/recreational help:

- Plainview (Tulare County) - about 200 houses on 40 acres, primarily farm-worker community; no recreational space. They need a park or a place to play.
- New London (northern Tulare County) – there is a small park, but not big enough for sports.
- Self Help Enterprises is working with water and sewage projects alternatives. It would be great to make evaporation/percolation or storage ponds into habitat. Possible sites for habitat creation include a storage pond on Ridgeway and a Farmersville sewage treatment plant with evaporation/percolation ponds. The Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District is planning a recharge basin on Deep Creek (which connects to Kaweah Oaks Preserve) just south of 198 – could this be made into a recreational area?

TLBWG feedback: Carole suggested emphasizing job creation when looking for funding. Steve Laymon suggested looking to Arcata sewage treatment ponds for an example. Petaluma is also putting in major wetland treatment for its sewage. Sacramento regional water treatment plants may also be a good model. There is potential with USFWS partners program. The Watershed Coordinator would help find funding for these sorts of things. John Shelton suggested getting university engineering clubs (e.g. Cal Poly, CSU Fresno) to do some out-of-the-box designs. John Shelton will email Paul with contacts and ideas.

## **10. Update on Integrated Regional Water Management Groups**

Sam Schaefer (Poso Creek IRWM): A spreading grounds project at Semitropic is done and they will be banking water by this fall. They also plan to move forward with Poso Creek retention ponds (a project about ten times the size of the Delano-Earlimart project.) Other projects in the works include the West-East Pintail Slough. The Poso Creek IRWM is preparing a DWR Implementation grant application. Sam is looking to TBWP/TLBWG members for advice on upland habitat design. TBWP will advise on whatever project the Poso Creek IRWM group decides to put forward. Steve Laymon said that the BLM just completed a report on nine years of upland work at Atwell Island that he can share. (The report also contains good information on habitat restoration). Steve is in Bakersfield most Tuesdays and may be available to meet.

## **11. Brief round of Agency and NGO updates**

- Roman Benitez (LNAS): A Joint Land Use Study is ongoing between Kings and Fresno Counties, the City of Lemoore, and Lemoore Naval Air Station. The intent is to plan land use so that the naval installation can continue to train and operate and the municipalities can continue to grow. LNAS considers farmland and open space compatible uses with the installation. The next meeting is November 5.
- Roman Benitez: The Readiness Environmental Protection Initiative (REPI) is a program that allows the Navy to enter into agreements with willing landowners in which the Navy may hold easements, etc. as long as land use kept compatible with Navy needs. *This works well in Fallon, NV. Roman trying to bring this program to this area. (Attachment: REPI\_FactSheet).*
- Carole Combs (TBWP): the USFWS/ Central Valley Joint Venture has funded CSG consulting for this year. Thank you to Bob Shaffer and Ruth Ostroff!
- Steve Laymon (BLM): 300 acres of upland habitat will be planted at Atwell Island in the coming weeks. An Americorp crew is coming in to do wetland restoration next week.
- Michelle Selmon (DWR): DWR now has regional climate change staff positions throughout state. Michelle will be working with Tulare Basin IRWM groups to help them incorporate climate change issues into their plans and is available to help beyond that role.
- Bob Shaffer (CVJV) was unable to attend but sent information about the USFWS Landscape Conservation Cooperative program (*attachment: lcc\_faq\_ca\_version*).

## 12. Next meeting:

April 1, 2010: 10 am – 12 noon Herbert Preserve Site Visit; 1-4:30 TLBWG meeting at NRCS-Visalia office.