

MEETING SUMMARY

Tulare Basin Watershed Connections – Working Group August 12th, 2015

Participants

Michelle Selmon – California Department of Water Resources (DWR) (Working Group lead)
John Austin – retired forest manager
Dezaraye Bagalayos – Tulare Basin Wildlife Partners (TBWP)
Nancy Bruce – Circle J Ranch (CJR)
Sarah Campe – Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC)
Dave Hoffman – Deer-Creek Tule River Association (DC TRA)
Carolyn Hunsaker – US Forest Service (USFS)
Matt Hurley – Angiola Irrigation District (AID)
Ryan Jensen – Community Water Center (CWC) (on the phone)
Denise Kadara – Community of Allensworth (ALER) (on the phone)
Bobby Kamansky – Kamansky Biological Consulting (KBC)
Adam Livingston – Sequoia Riverlands Trust (SRT) (on the phone)
Nino Mascolo – Southern California Edison (SCE) (on the phone)
Jennifer Morales – California Department of Water Resources (DWR)
Dick Moss – Tulare Basin Regional IRWM Coordination Group (TBRCG)
Lucas Patzek – (Ag Innovations Network) (on the phone)
Mohammad Safeeq – UC Merced
Joe Williams – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Nikki Woodard – Tulare Basin Wildlife Partners (TBWP) (on the phone)

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

- ✚ Proposed *Statement of Purpose* for subgroups was discussed and accepted by the group
- ✚ Dick Moss (Provost and Pritchard) provided an overview of the background of Tulare Basin Regional IRWM Coordination Group (TB RCG) and the group discussed ways the WCW can support that effort
 - The TB RCG is primarily a communications group focused on funding opportunities and more recently SGMA implementation
 - The WCW can support the RCG and other efforts by keeping a broader focus and helping coordinate the upper and lower watershed planning and project funding
 - Data management and providing accessibility can be another niche for the WCW
- ✚ Joe Williams (NRCS) provided an update on the Regional Conservation Partnerships Program (RCCP)
 - RCCP is a new program; \$225 million available in FY 2015
 - RCCP hopes to further conservation and restoration; wants partners to cooperate with producers
 - Focus on working with private owners with an emphasis on SWAPH (soils, water, atmosphere, plants, humans)
 - There is interest in watersheds among growers and ranchers
 - Pre-applications will likely be requested again in March or April 2016
- ✚ Sarah Campe (SNC) gave an update on SNC Proposition 1 funding
 - Federal agencies not eligible but work can take place on federal lands

- Applicants should link work to the California Water Action Plan
- There are substantial funds available through the SNC, CDFW and WCB grants (over \$500 million); WCW may want to have a subgroup work on matching projects to dollars
- SNC has compiled data on work being done or in planning stages; information can be used in grant proposals
- Tahoe-Sierra IRWMP watershed mapping tool (beta version):
<http://www.sierrawaterworkgroup.org/tahoe-sierra-irwm.html>
- ✚ Michelle will develop a Survey Monkey to be distributed to the WCW list to help compile information about regional projects and partner capacity so we can start to connect the dots between the various efforts
- ✚ The group discussed the fact that we need to be able to demonstrate that upper watershed management projects benefit the downstream users , in particular the cost/ac benefit of actions
- ✚ Multiple group members expressed that there is an important opportunity to integrate thinking across the watershed, even though coordinating with headwaters managers is not required under SGMA
 - Dezaraye Bagalayos is attending most SGMA meetings and can update the group at a future meeting on the status

DETAILED MEETING NOTES (Note – speaker is noted when it makes sense for context, otherwise comments not attributed to encourage free dialogue)

Opening remarks and discussion

- ✚ Agenda and ground rules were reviewed
- ✚ Proposed Statement of Purpose for subgroups discussed; participants were fine with it
- ✚ Ground rules and subgroups will be included as a last page to meeting agendas and summaries in the future

Dick Moss- Update on the Tulare Basin Regional IRWM Coordination Group (TB RCG)

- ✚ The TBRCG formed shortly after the passage of the IRWM Planning Act of 2002
- ✚ Initially focused on watersheds (Tule, Kaweah, Kings, etc.)
- ✚ Group was concerned DWR would want to see a larger collaboration, so they tried to form a Joint Powers Authority. That was not successful, but it became clear that DWR was fine with the smaller groups as long as they were looking for opportunities to work together
- ✚ The TBRCG remains a communications groups primarily, they have monthly meetings to explore funding opportunities, discuss status of projects and funding, and have begun to coordinate on SGMA implementation
- ✚ There will be cross-coordination among IRWM and SGMA groups
- ✚ Groups are still forming; in some cases it's not clear yet who will step up to be the GSA
- ✚ County of Tulare has ultimate responsibility to make sure all areas are coordinating in the county
- ✚ Kern County had already had a coordination/consolidation entity monitoring GW, they will most likely step up
- ✚ There will probably ultimately be 20-25 GSAs in the Basin

- ✚ In last round of IRWM grant funding, TBRCG tried to coordinate submittals of grants as to not compete with each other. They had good discussions occurred but didn't really come together and they ended up competing.
- ✚ Michelle: How can the Watershed Connections Workgroup support the efforts of the TBRCG?
 - Dick: The IRWMP groups have the planning processes pretty well aligned; this group has a broader focus and could help coordinate the upper and lower watershed planning and project funding
- ✚ Michelle: Do you think there is interest among those in the group to support upper-lower watershed projects?
 - Dick: Yes, there is a lot of interest and much that can be done
- ✚ Bobby: Data management is a big issue we've discussed a lot and we still need to figure out how to make data management cohesive
 - Data management may need to become a subgroup so we can make all of this data (e.g. Carolyn's stream management data) seamless and available to water managers
 - Much of the data is not digitized and yet could be used to inform potential projects
 - Niki: The TB Watershed Initiative had a vision to create an interactive mapping tool for data layering and she pulled together some maps based on data compiled for the SJV Greenprint Phase 1
 - Greenprint Phase 2 will include pilot projects and working with DataBasin (databasin.org) so there is more to come
 - Carolyn: Did they look upstream of the Valley floor?
 - Niki: They do focus on headwaters but she's not sure what data sources they're using; she'll keep us informed as the process continues
 - Michelle is participating on the Greenprint as an "Expert Panel" member, which will provide an opportunity for input on the need for increased upper-lower watershed integrated resources planning
 - Bobby: CSUF has 2 graduate students, Jean Wang and John Stun that may be available to help with a project; they might even have money and just need a contract
 - Jennifer and Michelle will follow up on this
 - Michelle: the CA Biodiversity Council is working on this issue of data management at the state-level and so the agencies will also be making data more compatible and accessible
 - Bobby: BIOS was updated using Prop 84 dollars and is now up-to-date (versus being years behind as they were in the past)
 - A good example of what we might do for our watershed is the Klamath Basin GIS Portal [<http://www.klamathdss.org/>]

Joe Williams (NRCS) – Regional Conservation Partnerships Program (RCCP)

- ✚ RCCP is a new program; \$225 million available in FY 2015
 - Some contracts have already been awarded here in CA
- ✚ Goal is to increase partnership opportunities through the Farm Bill in order to leverage funds
- ✚ Unique opportunity, 600 preapprovals submitted (so the interest is there)

- ✚ Program is evolving, looking at doing pre-applications again in March or April 2016
- ✚ Max \$10 million over 5 years; most funded proposals were much less than that
- ✚ RCPP hopes to further conservation and restoration; wants partners to cooperate with producers
 - Focus on working with private owners with a watershed emphasis
- ✚ Question: Previously most funding has to go through growers and can't go through public agencies like irrigation districts, will this funding be able to go through public agencies?
 - Joe: Yes - covered programs include- ACEP, EQIP, CSP, HFRP
 - A lot of growers have gotten together to look at the whole watershed and a lot of acreage is focused on conservation
 - \$100 mil funded through Farm Bill: 25% state project, 40% to federal projects, rest to critical conservation areas
- ✚ Question: Could a place like SCE apply?
 - Joe: Yes- it depends on how it's worded and who their partners were
 - Competitive process and partners responsible for significant portion of costs; State money can be leveraged depending on how worded; funds cannot be used to cover partner administrative costs; match can be in-kind services.
- ✚ Example: Project funded this year- Tri-colored blackbird protection, restoration and enhancement on agricultural lands
 - \$1million project: partnership between dairy farmers, NRCS, and Audubon California (lead)
 - Looking for long term solutions, partnering with Western Dairymen Association and others.
- ✚ Example: (not funded yet) Central and Southern Sierra Nevada streambed restoration workshops to teach ecological restoration techniques that improve profitability on ranches
 - Training people to host subsequent workshops ("training the trainers")
 - Primary concern water quality, water quantity, soil health.
 - Bobby- some federal lands also have grazing permits and are considered producers which offers opportunities.
 - More info on [NRCS website](#), there is a list of funded projects and partners. Applicants have to apply under one funding pool.
- ✚ Question: Are there any opportunities for data funding? Or would it have to be on-the-ground work with data on the side?
 - Joe- on the ground work would be better (but could include data synthesis)
- ✚ Supporting the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program with data aggregation could be a project
 - The Regional Board has expanded to the crest of the Sierra and a fair amount of data will be generated due to requirements
 - WBC has money for science and monitoring
 - WCB \$ and RCPP \$ together could leverage interesting projects

Sarah Campe – SNC Proposition 1 funding Watershed Improvement Program (WIP)

- ✚ Federal agencies not eligible but work can take place on federal lands
- ✚ Funding is through the Water Bond so applicants should link back to the California Water Action Plan
- ✚ SNC grant- forest health \$10 million
- ✚ CDFW- watershed restoration grant, wide net cast, ecosystem restoration focus
- ✚ WCB- streamflow enhancement, TCWP identified a lot of riparian corridors as key areas to restore for multiple benefits. \$500 million available between the groups. The money is out there if we can get the projects out. Maybe we need a project workgroup.
- ✚ If a connection can be made to headwaters, Sarah can offer facilitation and help grant writing.
- ✚ Bobby- we have at least 2 projects in Sequoia National Forest, and have proposals complete, but we need to convene a meeting of forest service personnel to chart out CEQA/NEPA and permitting process.
 - Sierra RCD is interested in assisting, but they need someone to receive the funds
 - Sarah can help coordinate these projects and groups
- ✚ Sarah's Kings River map shown. We have a lot of data and research provided already. Forest service planning service websites, using what they've identified work is being done and where projects are ready and SNC and DFW projects being done or planned. This gives us a rough idea of what's going on, so if you're looking for where to do projects you can overlay the CA Habitat Connectivity layers on previously identified priority lands and add this to your application to show how your project is offering a unique connection to other priority areas that have been called out
- ✚ Michelle noted that the map looks similar to Nikki's mapping efforts, could you help us polish these maps of existing projects and key project areas?
- ✚ Niki: yes, the SJV Greenprint database gives me access to similar map and I'd be happy to help.
 - Nancy: It would also be cool to show people exactly where there water comes from **findyourwatershed.com**.
- ✚ Sarah noted that the data is at pretty coarse scale but there may be more fine-scaled data we can access
- ✚ Sarah and Niki to meet with a GIS expert to put together a finer-scaled map and make it accessible
- ✚ Lucas: SWWG meeting update – Tahoe-Sierra IRWMP is developing a watershed mapping project as part of a SNAP proposal for the entire Sierra and it's already downloadable and they're looking to expand it
 - See Tahoe-Sierra IRWMP website: <http://www.sierrawaterworkgroup.org/tahoe-sierra-irwm.html>
- ✚ Resilient lands and water mentions removing barriers and directing more funding to the Sierras by a watershed by watershed basis, this group can go beyond SNC (WIP) by identifying downstream users interests and figuring out how to connect them to the watershed

- ✚ Mill Flat Creek in the Sierra National Forest both have projects with needs but federal agencies are not eligible so what groups would be able to manage a grant program?
 - Wildlife Partners does not have the capacity but in theory with a big enough grant you could use them (existing nonprofit)
 - Sierra RCD?
 - Tribal entities could also do it, Sierra Foot Hill Conservancy has partnered with Big Sandy Rancheria to develop a working relationship for a project on co-treatment
 - Bobby: tribes would be great partners but I don't know that they can contract easily with other entities
 - KDWCD is a well-recognized established group that could be used to build that upper lower connection, and has some capacity
 - KRCD is another potential options
 - SFC is well established but may have different focus.
 - Sarah's group can offer a grant development workshop
- ✚ Michelle: How would the group feel if I generated a Survey Monkey to go out to the entire WCW list to ask about upcoming projects?
 - Potential questions: What grant criteria does the project meet (e.g. water supply, quality, restoration, other)? Status of project? Capacity of organization (i.e. able to administer grants)? What other ways can TBWC help move forward your agency goals? We can use this information to pursue Prop 1 dollars.
 - The group agreed this is a good idea and would be very useful
- ✚ Bobby: we have rapidly approaching upcoming grant deadlines
 - Michelle: Yes, we will very likely not be able to apply for the upcoming grants (mid to end of September deadlines) but these funds are the 'tip of the iceberg' and substantially more money will be available down the road. It will also help us to see what grants get funded and what they're looking for and which projects don't make it and why.
 - Michelle discussed 'upcoming grants' spreadsheet.
- ✚ Carolyn: Also ask 'Do you have shape file for your projects and can you supply them?'
 - Michelle: Agreed, and that can give us a head start on our data management projects
- ✚ Bobby- SSIRWMP received ~\$250,000 from the LCC that could partner with the Wildlife Conservation Society North American program grant
 - Michelle agreed to add this grant document to the website

Subgroup & Partner Updates

- ✚ Michelle noted that the subgroups are developing organically and fulfilling roles as needed
- ✚ Carolyn submitted a proposal to support a one-and-a-half year post-doc focused on Kings River drainage to bring upper-lower watershed data to users; should know by 1st half of September if awarded. Each person participating in the workgroup would have access to a larger group to foster downstream user support of headwater activities that provide resilience and potentially

increased water quality. This would be an opportunity for this group to leverage a funded project along with the Nature Conservancy.

- ✚ Adam attended a California Economics Summit event (2014 Capitol Day Program) with a session focused on working landscapes and state wide water issues with emphasis on Central Valley issues
- ✚ Adam: SRT helping with SGMA process - hoping to influence composition of authority agencies, plan inclusions, and timeline goals. Many of these decisions will be made within the next 6-18 months.
- ✚ Lucas: Ag Innovations is working with DWR on SGMA, GSA's are notifying DWR on their intent now;
 - Q: Are people in upper watersheds supposed to be included?
 - Lucas: The groups do not necessarily include upper watersheds/headwaters, there's a limited requirement for coordination; it will really be dependent on the entity; plus very few upper watersheds are considered medium or high priority so it will be interesting to see their program implementation
 - These agencies need to be connected and there is an opportunity to integrate thinking across a watershed
- ✚ Matt Hurley is on practitioner/advisory panel for emerging regulations for SGMA and the common theme has been that there should be requirements for intra-basin coordination and also inter-basin coordination.
 - He thinks DWR will likely take a broader hydrologic region approach.
- ✚ Dick noted that water balance and water supply must be a focus of this group to engage interest in watershed issue
 - Demonstration projects needed that demonstrate cost per acre of downstream benefit; We have to demonstrate proof that these ideas work or you won't get any traction with these groups
 - Carolyn noted that she has data, but the current drought is making it difficult to see results; may have more results by spring
 - Must connect the upper watershed people with the ag community at the CC resilience and ag workshop
 - Recommendation that the workshop focus on principles and BMPs rather than strategies (which may be premature)
 - A good strategy may be to go after funds for permitting on federal lands and then go after project money (rather than the other way around)
- ✚ Carolyn has a research paper with UC Merced on ETo and groundwater coming out and would like to present at the November meeting.
- ✚ Bobby: having a workshop that offers unproven ideas might be premature; we may need to wait till Carolyn's research is published to show the benefits and costs per acre of thinning
- ✚ Joe: NRCS is working on implementing BMPs on 60,000 acres plus from the headwaters down to ag and we could show benefits of these projects, use older studies (still useful!) and new information along with Carolyn's research to show proven benefits

- ✚ Dick- people need to see proven benefits if we want them to spend money
- ✚ WCB funds may be available for data collection; we should look at existing projects to see what they're willing to fund
- ✚ Dez- is attending all the SGMA meetings and can update the group at another meeting
- ✚ Michelle will send out meeting summary and a scheduling poll for our next meeting; and will send the 'funding opportunities' spreadsheet to Niki for posting

Tulare Basin Watershed Connections Workgroup

Goal Statement: *To advance collaborative watershed planning and resource management in the Tulare Basin based on sound science and mutually identified needs for regional economic and ecological sustainability.*

Ground Rules

- ✚ Participate and show respect for other members and their time
- ✚ Speak one at a time
- ✚ Share relevant information
- ✚ Be concise
- ✚ Express concerns and interests (not positions)
- ✚ Be solution-oriented
- ✚ Draw on each other's experience
- ✚ Limit sidebar conversations
- ✚ Focus on what CAN be changed (not on what cannot be changed)

Subgroups

Purpose of Subgroups: Topic-based groups comprised of people with expertise and interest in developing strategies and implementing projects to address the challenges related to the topic; the subgroups meet and/or provide input to the broader working group as funding and partnership opportunities arise. There is substantial overlap and it is recognized that subgroup members should communicate with others as appropriate when planning a project or event.

- ✚ Funding
- ✚ Sustainable Groundwater and Surface Water
- ✚ Extreme Events and Climate Change Resilience
- ✚ Upper/Lower Watershed Connection: Education, Planning and Project Development
- ✚ Regional Landscape-scale Project Prioritization and Implementation
- ✚ Wetland and Wildlife Habitat Protection and Restoration
- ✚ Tribal Community Support for Addressing Water-related Challenges
- ✚ Disadvantaged Community Support for Water-Related Challenges