

# Tuolumne River Technical Advisory Committee

## Don Pedro Project – FERC License 2299

Modesto Irrigation District  
Turlock Irrigation District  
City & County of San Francisco  
California Department of Fish & Wildlife  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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### TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

JUNE 10, 2021 AT 9:30 AM

VIA ZOOM

#### *SUMMARY*

#### 1. INTRODUCTION AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Participants made self-introductions
- Chris Guptill is now the chair of the Citizens Advisory Committee and trying to push for more funding.

#### 2. ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS:

- Review/revise agenda – No changes.
- Approved notes from March 2021 meeting
- Items since last meeting –

#### 3. MONITORING/REPORTS:

- Jason Guinard went over the spring monitoring report handouts, RST & Seine surveys and weir updates.
- Patrick Maloney- Thermograph downloads completed June 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. One thermograph was cut off of its cable up above the La Grange CDFW building and has been replaced. The snorkel survey will be done July 21<sup>st</sup> thru July 23<sup>rd</sup> and will include incidental sightings. Discussion on fish size reporting

#### 4. FLOW OPERATIONS:

- Patrick Maloney – This is a completely different year as far as calculating how much run-off we're going to have based on the amount of snow and precipitation that has fallen state wide. Our calculations have been off maybe 75% state wide this year. There are a combination of factors that have caused this phenomena. Went over flow schedule handouts
- Chris Guptill advised that the Tuolumne River is not quite as low as anticipated. There is about 100 CFS in Modesto with Dry Creek coming in and they anticipate doing in river clean up while the flows allow. The river water is very clear. Pre clean up to be scheduled before the increase in flow in September.
- Gretchen – why is the flow 126 CFS @ the beginning of October?
- Patrick – FERC flow schedule calls for 126 CFS this year as the base flow numbers change over time as all the years are compiled and averaged. Patrick to hold a Zoom meeting to go over the numbers with Wes Monier and anyone interested.

#### 5. AGENCY/NGO UPDATES:

- Michael Cooke – Update on MOU between San Francisco, TID, MID & USFWS. They have teamed up to develop a pilot project to improve fish and wild life habitat along the Tuolumne and have been working with USFWS. The effort began in October 2018 when USFWS submitted conditions for the Don Pedro and La Grange relicensing efforts. Condition number 3 stated that

we needed to develop and implement a Lower Tuolumne River habitat improvement program and associated capital and annual funding accounts. They are working on figuring out how is the best way to go about that. They developed a MOU earlier this year which was adopted by the respective Boards and signed by USFWS. Basically the MOU says, “The parties anticipate working together in good faith to select, define and implement habitat improvement work on the Tuolumne River, in advance of FERC’s issuances of new licenses for the projects. The key thing is they have been asked by USFWS to work on these projects prior to getting the license. So rather than wait for the license to be issued, we are moving ahead with this effort now. The Districts and SFPUC have pledged four million dollars to get this effort moving along. With the signing of the MOU earlier this year, the Districts, CCSF and USFWS have started discussions on the criteria for potential projects. The parties have not committed to any particular project at this time and it is still open for discussion with USFWS. Questions for USFWS: Do they want to work on planning a design or focus on construction? Do they want to work on an existing project or start a new project? Do they want to focus on one project, or spread the funds around? Are they looking for a quick result or a long term investment? Do they want to partner with an NGO on the river or do a stand-alone project? If they fund an existing project, how do they develop a project selection process? Do they have a Grant or a formal application with scoring criteria, selection committee, etc...? The next step is a meeting with USFWS on June 14<sup>th</sup> to see what kind of projects are of interest to them. They have had McBain put together a status report on the various plans and existing projects on the Tuolumne and will probably start there with the projects that you know and see what kind of interest USFWS has with those. Again, they haven’t committed to any particular project at this time and are waiting for direction from USFWS. It’s important to note that these projects take time and that’s why we were interested in moving ahead now with early implementation to make some improvements to the Tuolumne while we continue to work through our relicensing efforts.

- Allison & Dave Boucher – Can you describe what you would see as a stand-alone project and who would take the lead.
- Michael Cooke – That would be a project that no one is working on right now, so the Districts, CCFS or USFWS would take the lead on that.
- Noah Hume – Is there sort of an advisory or technical committee overseeing the selection and who would populate that?
- Michael Cooke – We haven’t got there yet, and this is one of the questions. If USFWS directed us to work with an existing project for instance, then that would involve some type of Grant process where we have applications, selection committee, scoring criteria and go from there. We are using public money so we have to have a transparent process for selecting projects on where to spend that money.
- Gretchen Murphey – Will there be updates to this group as you make progress and come to any conclusions and decisions?
- Michael Cooke – Absolutely, and I would be happy to come back at any time. There are a lot of people here with a lot of knowledge of the Tuolumne and I want to keep everybody engaged and informed about what’s going on. As things become clearer I will report back to this group as to where we are headed.
- Allison & Dave Boucher TRC Update– We wanted to make sure that everyone is aware of the massive amount of work that has been done and is still being worked on. Starting upstream at La Grange Dam there was Cal Fed funding to design restoration from La Grange Dam down to the old La Grange Bridge. Riffles A3, 4, 5, 6 & 7 have 30% designs and are hydrologically connected. That was Cal Fed funding and I think that CDFW input gravel at A7 at least twice.
- During Cal Fed time yes, but since Cal Fed time we also have a lot of gravel introductions in that area.
- Allison Boucher – There has been significant gravel added and continues to be added as it works its way downstream. Patrick Koepele has a grant that works from the Old La Grange Bridge down past Buck Flat to the end of the county property on the left bank and that is for design and some implementation. The Grant will take out some of the old remnant bridge, especially focused on getting that I beam out of the middle of the river which is a boating hazard. This project started in the middle of May with control points being put up, river surveys and flood plain surveys started.

Within that stretch, the conservancy owns about 60 acres, river right immediately below the new La Grange Bridge and the work that Patrick's grant will do in-stream we will piggy back onto in the future to restore that 60 acres, it has an elevated bridge road that blocks the flood flows significantly. Immediately below Buck Flat and on river right is property owned by Ron Zanker, a new purchase, and he's interested in having that restored. It has a nice wide flood plain and a good opportunity for some side channel work. It's about 4,000 linear feet and makes a really nice stretch when you add the county on the left bank. That gives a really nice design and restoration about 1 ½ or 2 miles below the new bridge. There is some good spawning and rearing habitat there, needs a lot of rock and the flood plain lowered a lot in some places. I think there are opportunities for three side channels. Below that about 3 miles is the Zanker Farm which is 2 miles and there is a Grant to design the first mile and we have written another Grant hoping to get funding to do the second mile. About 1 mile below the Zanker Farm starts Bobcat Flat and we have 100% designs for construction of about a mile or so worth of river front and extensive flood plain work. The Grant submitted is for 85,000 cubic yards of gravel, asking for \$5 million plus for one year's work. Downstream from that is the design in the river by the Turlock Campground and TID had that included in their FERC submissions. It was one of the projects submitted for gravel augmentation to FERC during the license process. Essentially there is work being done, planned or being designed from the La Grange Dam down to the Turlock Campground, wherever you have a friendly cooperative land owner.

- Gretchen Murphey – Does the Grant for the Zanker property include the old bridge remnants.
- Allison Boucher – Yes, the Grant that we have is where the old bridge was, in the upper mile. It includes removing the old bridge remnants and opening up a side channel that had been filled for the bridge to cross over the flood plain.
- Jason Guinard – Is there any in channel fill of those ponds at Zanker or is that all side channel work.
- Allison Boucher – It includes in-stream work. Our plan is not only to protect where the trout use the pools but to add spawning rock for both salmon and o'mykiss and in that process add diversity and reduce the bass habitat. It is in-stream and flood plain design work.
- Jason Guinard – I was talking specifically about that big long pool at the lower bridge where it is a lot more bass habitat than trout habitat.
- Allison Boucher – Patrick Maloney snorkels a riffle right in there and right below that riffle is a really good pool that we want to incorporate as trout habitat.
- Patrick Maloney – There are a lot pools out there, some of them house adult o'mykiss all year and some of them house striped bass and bass, not all year but a majority of the time especially in drought years. I think it would behoove anyone designing restoration and incorporating pools to go through there with a mask and snorkel day after day to see where the trout are utilizing the pools and where the predatory type fish are. These bigger, deeper pools may have a couple of trout in there but the majority are striped bass. The smaller pools or runs that have maybe a 6' or 8' deep slot that have riparian veg hanging over them tend to have more trout.
- Steve Tsao – there is some concern on the side channel work diverting water and not having real benefits in the long run.
- Allison Boucher – We also have concern about creating the side channels.
- Fred Meir – We just went out to collect the base data and as part of this process the CDFW and DWR grant will be submitting conceptual designs for review to the agencies as well as an existing conditions report for this project as well as the Zanker project. Initially, there is going to be a lot of public outreach through the TRT and TRC for folks to comment on the concepts as we move forward.
- Tim Caldwell – What we hope to do in some of the designs as we get to this point is adding complexity and removing any potential habitat for warm water species. To the point of the side channels, usually when implemented if there is a side channel design incorporated they are more of a water retention plan in this case and so providing additional juvenile habitat as opposed to bleeding additional water from the main flow of the river.
- Steve Tsao – It is a regulated river so somewhere down the road we all know what the river is going to be. You may want to design to that target.

- Allison Boucher – Just a reminder that the TRC is not anti-salmon, it is just they have always focused on trout to try to balance the focus on the salmon.
- Gretchen Murphey – During the design phase for the old La Grange to new La Grange bridges, during big salmon years we do pull out in that stretch from the shoreline and using that access would be problematic.
- Ruth Goodfield – I want to make another plug for a collaborative, data driven, habitat prioritization effort in the Lower Tuolumne. The time is ripe with the new funding coming in, the new projects coming on line to get some really great maps, GIS type stuff together and then sit down together to talk some of these things out and prioritize.
- Allison Boucher – We are curious how our work is going to interface with Michael Cooke's presentation about the \$4 million pilot program and who is going to lead the work and what kind of input this technical advisory committee will have.

6. **ADDITIONAL ITEMS:**

7. **NEXT MEETING DATE: SEPTEMBER 09, 2021**

**TRTAC Meeting Attendees**

	<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Organization</u></b>
1.	Patrick Maloney	TID
2.	Dana Ortolan	TID
3.	Michael Cooke	TID
4.	Randy Fiorini	TID
5.	Frank Leandro	TID
6.	Gretchen Murphey	CDFW
7.	Bernard Aguilar	CDFW
8.	Peter Drekeimer	TRT
9.	Stephanie Milsap	USFWS
10.	Allison & Dave Boucher	TRC
11.	Brooke Watkins	DWR
12.	Ruth Goodfield	NOAA Restoration Center
13.	Emily Mullins	River Partners
14.	Noah Hume	SWS
15.	Wayne Swaney	SWS
16.	Gordon Enas	MID
17.	Michael Caine	CA State Parks Div of Boating & Waterways
18.	Chris Guptill	9 to 99 Group
19.	Steve Tsao	CDFW
20.	Chris Carr	State Water Board
21.	Claire Walker	ETIC
22.	Fred Meir	McBain & Associates
23.	Tim Caldwell	McBain & Associates
24.	Jason Guinard	Fish Bio
25.	Bill Sears	San Francisco
26.	Nathan Houx	City of Modesto
27.	Kristine Atkinson	DWR