

COSUMNES RIVER TASK FORCE

**Oversight Committee
September 9, 2003
USDA-NRCS, Elk Grove CA
7:00 PM – 8:50 PM**

Minutes: Tina Lunt, Cosumnes River Task Force

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION:

Tina Lunt opened the meeting at 7:10. Don Nottoli arrived later and finished chairing the meeting. Self-introductions were made by Ken Oneto (Sacramento County Farm Bureau), Walt Hoppe (Landowner), David Utterback (RD 800) Jeanne Chilcott (Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, and Larry Rodriguez (Robertson-Bryan Inc. also representing the Southeast Sacramento County Agricultural Water Authority).

2. CALFED FUNDED - COSUMNES RIVER RESOURCES INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT PROGRESS REPORT

Two public meetings were held, one in Elk Grove and one in Placerville. On September 15 the final report will be available on cd, hardcopy and on our website.

3. PROJECT UPDATES

• Southeast Sacramento County Agricultural Water Authority (SSCAWA)

Working with Sacramento County Farm Bureau, Sacramento County Ag Commissioner, Sloughhouse RCD and the North Delta Water Agency on forming a subwatershed group (a subwatershed group of the Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition) as one of the options the Regional Board has given to potential ag dischargers. By forming a watershed group costs should be significantly less for ag dischargers than if they applied for individual permits. The Ag Commissioner will be sending out a letter to ag operators who have signed up in their office for pesticide use permits that explains the three options ag owners/operators have to compile with the conditional waiver. We need to get parcel data for all ag owners as this list will leave off a significant number. Don said it was possible that the county could pay for the cost of obtaining the parcel data.

• Lower Cosumnes and Mokelumne Rivers Feasibility Study (a.k.a. Army Corps Study)

Craig met with the Board of Reclamation District 800, their legal counsel, and their engineer to discuss RD 800 taking the lead on the Lower Cosumnes and Mokelumne Rivers Feasibility Study.

Craig outlined the lead role that he thinks RD 800 will need to play to successfully advance a bypass project between Dillard Road and Highway 99. Specifically, Craig suggested that the following actions would be required:

1. Lead an aggressive outreach program to the landowners, to educate them on the benefits and non-benefits of the bypass system, with the objective of gaining support for a benefit assessment and dedication of the needed flowage easements.
2. Eventually expand the District boundaries southwest to Highway 99, to implement the third, most downstream bypass component.
3. Levy a benefit assessment to fund the local share of the projects (or perhaps three assessment zones, as each bypass component is implemented).

4. Working with the study team and their property owners, determine whether the bypass system would have to be actively operated (versus a system of passive weirs), and if so, confirm that they are willing to take on the liability of operating the system.
5. Political involvement, to expedite Corps review of the proposed plan and funding for the project.

Craig felt that RD 800 was very daunting by the efforts required and the challenges ahead. RD 800 representative David Utterback said that they were a bit overwhelmed, and that they were worried about liability and cost. David requested more information from Craig (some kind of binder or outline that had the project proponents clearly outlined).

The Larry Rodriguez, representing the Southeast Sacramento County Agricultural Water Authority (SSCAWA) suggested that they maybe able to take the lead or be a co-lead with RD 800. The SSCAWA and RD 800 are going to meet with Sacramento County DWR to discuss this further.

- **Stream Gauges**

The equipment has been purchased and the State is testing it to make sure it is running properly before they install it. The gages will eventually be online with the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) and the Sacramento DWR website.

Several years ago, SAFCA had committed to 40 percent of ongoing costs, with an annual maximum of \$20,000, while RD 800 committed to an annual maximum of \$3,000. For the initial three years, actual costs are \$5,400 and \$1,300, respectively. These savings result from having DWR (rather than USGS) operate the gages. DWR was roughly 67% of the USGS costs, and DWR cost-shares 50 percent (versus no cost-sharing by the USGS).

- **Other**

- **Ag Waivers** (see Southeast Sacramento County Agricultural Water Authority)

- **California Watershed Council / Watershed Forum**

The Watershed Council had their first meeting on August 28, 2003. The purpose of the Council is to provide advice and recommendations to CalEPA and the Resources Agency on the development of California's watershed programs and to serve as a forum for problem solving. The Water Forum will meet on September 19, 2003 from 9-5 in Sacramento.

- **Department of Conservation Watershed Coordinator Grants**

An RFP for Watershed Coordinators should be out at the end of September/beginning of October. The Coordinator Grants will be for 3 years. We should start thinking about what our goals for the watershed are and how the Coordinator can best accomplish those goals. We have talked about a Watershed Plan and implementing or working on some of the components of the resources inventory and assessment. Water Quality is also a big issue and we should consider working on water quality issues by training high school students and landowners in the watershed. If you have other ideas please contact Tina Lunt.

- **Newsletter** - This month I will be publishing the last newsletter under the CALFED grant. Give Tina Lunt your articles or ideas.

Adjourn - Next Meeting will held October 14, 2003