

# VTAC Meeting Minutes

December 2, 2011

CAL FIRE Mendocino Unit Headquarters—Howard Forest  
Willits, California

## Attendance

The following VTAC members attended the meeting:

Mike Liquori (Chair), Dr. Kevin Boston, Richard Gienger, and Peter Ribar.  
Dr. Kate Sullivan participated by conference line.

The following VTAC agency representatives attended the meeting:

Bill Stevens (NMFS), Bill Short (CGS), and Pete Cafferata (CAL FIRE).

Attendees:

Dennis Hall (CAL FIRE). Duane Shintaku (CAL FIRE) participated by conference line.

**[Action items are shown in bold print]**

## VTAC Announcements/Old and New Business

Pete Cafferata announced that he had spoken with Kevin Shaffer, DFG, and that Kevin and/or Dr. Stephen Swales, DFG, will be making a concerted effort to participate in VTAC meetings in the future.

Duane Shintaku announced that Crawford Tuttle left CAL FIRE at the end of November. **Duane will take the lead role in discussing possible VTAC pilot projects with landowners throughout California, with assistance from Mike Liquori, Bill Snyder, Dennis Hall, and Pete Cafferata.**

## Discussion of Potential VTAC Pilot Project Locations and Landowner Outreach

Duane Shintaku stated that he has spoken with Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) representatives regarding a possible submission of a VTAC pilot project. He informed the group that there is a strong possibility that SPI will volunteer a site in the Sierra Nevada to demonstrate a fuel hazard reduction project. Duane also stated that there remains a good chance that one or more pilot projects can be implemented on CAL FIRE's State Forests. Mike Liquori added that the Nature Conservancy (TNC) has contacted him with potential interest in a pilot project. Small landowner pilots remain the biggest challenge, and perhaps could be aided by funding through DFG's Fisheries Restoration Grant Program (FRGP) or federal grant programs.

There was discussion on how VTAC products will be made available to landowners and the regulatory agencies. Peter Ribar suggested possible half-day workshops

and field trips as part of an overall framework for VTAC outreach. Mike Liquori offered that a flowchart illustrating the process may be valuable, as well as a list of contacts. It was also suggested that a website identifying funding opportunities for small restoration projects would be valuable for small nonindustrial landowners. Dennis Hall and Richard Gienger noted that the State grants cannot be used by landowners to complete mitigation work under a THP, but may be available for planning purposes.

### **Brief Summary of the Recent BOF Monitoring Study Group Meeting**

Pete Cafferata provided a brief overview of the BOF Monitoring Study Group meeting held in Redding on November 16<sup>th</sup>. The main agenda items were presentations on: (1) large wood in northern California streams by Dr. Lee Benda; (2) NetMap by Dr. Benda, (3) NTMP monitoring in the North Coast Region by NCRWQCB and CAL FIRE staff, and (4) VTAC activities by Pete Cafferata. Meeting notes are posted at: [http://www.bof.fire.ca.gov/board\\_committees/monitoring\\_study\\_group/meeting\\_minutes/2011\\_msg\\_meeting\\_minutes/msg\\_meetingminutes\\_111611\\_final.pdf](http://www.bof.fire.ca.gov/board_committees/monitoring_study_group/meeting_minutes/2011_msg_meeting_minutes/msg_meetingminutes_111611_final.pdf) Additionally, all of the PowerPoint presentations from the meeting are posted at: [http://www.bof.fire.ca.gov/board\\_committees/monitoring\\_study\\_group/msg\\_archived\\_documents/](http://www.bof.fire.ca.gov/board_committees/monitoring_study_group/msg_archived_documents/)

### **Brief Summary of the Wood for Salmon Workgroup Effort**

Pete Cafferata provided a brief overview of goals and objectives for the Wood for Salmon Workgroup (WFSW). Bill Snyder of CAL FIRE is the de facto chair of this group and lead organizer. In short, the WFSW is attempting to develop a simplified, coordinated permitting process, outside of DFG's FRGP, that can facilitate large wood projects to rapidly improve habitat for listed anadromous salmonids in California (primarily within the area where Jon Ambrose's (NMFS) coho salmon Biological Opinion applies [Mendocino, Sonoma, and Santa Cruz Counties]). Jen Carah (TNC) has authored a white paper for the group describing the current permitting process for non-FRGP projects and Jon Ambrose had developed a detailed flowchart illustrating the existing process.

Currently, the FRGP process offers the best large wood enhancement pathway, including necessary permits, but has limits (lengthy application process, not available to private landowners (relies on NGOs), etc. See Jonathan Warmerdam's (NCRWQCB) PPT for an overview of the WFSW effort at: [ftp://frap.cdf.ca.gov/pub/incoming/IMMP/Wood%20for%20Salmon%20Workgroup%20Materials/WFSW%20PPTs/Warmerdam%20PPT%20051711\\_JW\\_W4SW\\_DFG.pdf](ftp://frap.cdf.ca.gov/pub/incoming/IMMP/Wood%20for%20Salmon%20Workgroup%20Materials/WFSW%20PPTs/Warmerdam%20PPT%20051711_JW_W4SW_DFG.pdf). Key WFSW documents, meeting notes, and PowerPoints are posted at: <ftp://frap.cdf.ca.gov/pub/incoming/IMMP/Wood%20for%20Salmon%20Workgroup%20Materials/>. WFSW outreach efforts being developed may be able to be aligned with VTAC outreach efforts.

## **Discussion on the Revised VTAC Pre-Consultation Guidance Document**

The revised pre-consultation guidance document, incorporating changes suggested at the VTAC meeting held on September 9<sup>th</sup>, was discussed by the group. Several additional minor changes were suggested for the guidelines by the group and recorded by Mike Liquori and Pete Cafferata. Peter Ribar proposed adding *“Agencies that participate in the review are encouraged to provide a written summary of their initial concerns.”* Duane Shintaku suggested that an example for the pre-consultation guidelines be completed and included as an appendix for the comprehensive VTAC guidance document. **Pete Cafferata agreed to fill out the form using the information previously developed for a large wood enhancement project located on the East Branch of Soquel Creek, and send both this document and the public draft of the “clean” pre-consultation guidelines to the VTAC. The VTAC will review both documents and email feedback to both Pete and Mike Liquori. The goal is to have final documents available by January 1, 2012 to share with landowners interested in pilot projects.**

## **Review of the Working Draft Version of the VTAC Guidance Document**

After discussion, the group decided to keep the VTAC guidance document as one document. When it is posted on the VTAC website, individual sections will be hyperlinked, as well as having one link for the entire document. Additional items agreed to include:

- Add a table of contents.
- Keep the table Dr. Doug Martin developed for Sound Watershed Consulting’s USFS SBI Grant document (toolbox for potential riparian assessment techniques; pages 12-16) in the body of the main document. The table will need to be reformatted and column headers are required for each page.
- A more complete list of documents for watershed context assessment is needed for section 10, including NMFS listed species recovery plans. Weblinks to the documents are to be provided.
- Appendix F will be an example of Pathway 3 (expert assessment), rather than template documents for situational scenarios.
- Consider putting section 11, submission requirements,” in the front of the document, rather than at the end.

The group agreed to keep section 12, “proposal processing” in the guidance document. Kevin Boston argued that this section is necessary for limiting regulatory “creep” and having agency review consistency. Peter Ribar suggested reviewing the document he produced for a large wood enhancement project (“Pilot Projects— DRAFT Conceptual Developmental LWD Placement” dated 11/18/10) as an example

of how processing of a Section V project might occur. **Bill Stevens agreed to send the group an example of a NMFS jeopardy analysis (edited to be simplified and appropriate) as a potential aid in providing guidance on Section V proposal processing.** Pete Cafferata reminded the group that there are two examples of Section V projects in the ASP Rules Question and Answer document produced last year (see the analysis sections for the two projects on pages 49-50; [http://www.fire.ca.gov/resource\\_mgt/downloads/Revised\\_Post-Workshop ASP Q&A doc 4 2 2010 Final.pdf](http://www.fire.ca.gov/resource_mgt/downloads/Revised_Post-Workshop ASP Q&A doc 4 2 2010 Final.pdf)). **It was agreed that each of the Review Team agencies (DFG, CGS, RWQCBs, and CAL FIRE) will write a single paragraph describing how they envision their agency will review and process Section V proposals.** Bill Short asked whether this section of the guidance document should be moved to the front of the document (similar to the submission requirements section).

The benefits and risks of keeping the situational scenarios pathway was then discussed (Pathway 2, section 8, page 24). Dennis Hall stated that the main risk is that landowners will use the situations as a checklist without supplying an adequate analysis. Peter Ribar countered that nothing in this pathway guarantees that a given project will be approved, and that with sufficient hedge words such as “typical”, “generalized”, etc., this is not a significant problem. Additional suggestions for the situational scenarios pathway included:

- Provide a section that defines the various headers (such as Typical Suitability Criteria).
- Make suitability criteria as “numeric free” as possible (i.e., make the criteria more qualitative than quantitative).
- Remove “appropriate” from the header for treatment options.
- List the hazards (“red flags”) for each situational scenario as “additional considerations”, not as one group of hazards for all the scenarios combined (as shown in the current draft).
- Provide guidance for the various scenarios as to the types of expertise that will likely be needed.
- Provide varied examples. Include additional photos and diagrams for the various scenarios, particularly showing before and after examples for the different forested regions of the state (Coast Ranges, Klamath Mountains, Cascade Range, Sierra Nevada). Mark Lancaster may be able to provide appropriate photos to supplement the ones already in the draft document.
- Include additional citations.

**Mike Liquori and Pete Cafferata volunteered to develop a new draft and send it out to the VTAC prior to the next meeting, endeavoring to provide sufficient time for review prior to the meeting date.**

**Next VTAC Meetings**

**The group agreed to have two VTAC meetings between January and the end of March 2012. Pete Cafferata will send out a Doodle poll to determine the dates (with a request to respond to the poll in 3-5 days).**