Anadromous Salmonid Protection Rule - Section V Pilot Projects Technical Advisory Committee (VTAC) Charter

June 25, 2010

I. VTAC Mission

The VTAC will act as a technical advisory committee for the development of: (1) at least two pilot projects that use site-specific information and measures to protect and restore the beneficial functions of the riparian zone in watersheds with listed anadromous salmonids, (2) recommendations to the Director regarding implementation guidelines for spatially explicit riparian projects, and (3) final recommendations to the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (BOF) regarding guidance document development for spatially explicit riparian management.[1] The VTAC shall also track implementation through CAL FIRE progress reports.

II. Membership

A. Appointment, Representation, and Compensation

The Director of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) shall appoint a panel of VTAC members with competent scientific and natural resource professional backgrounds that are willing to serve on the VTAC, and capable of developing work products in a timely manner. The members of the VTAC shall be selected with a public nomination process. A maximum of 12 members shall be appointed by the Director, with members having expertise in hydrology, geology, fluvial geomorphology, aquatic ecology, fisheries, and forestry, as well as a working knowledge of the California Forest Practice Rules and timber operations. There shall be at least one member each from CAL FIRE, California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), California Geological Survey (CGS), and a Regional Water Quality Control Board (i.e., the Review Team agencies). The balance of representatives shall be appointed from academia, state and federal

[1] Anadromous salmonid protection (ASP) rule 14 CCR § 916.9 [936.9, 956.9](v)(10) specifies the following: Board staff and the Department shall work with agencies, stakeholders, and appropriate scientific participants (e.g., Monitoring Study Group, Technical Advisory Committee) in a transparent process to: (1) describe and implement two pilot projects, including monitored results, using site-specific or non-standard operational provisions; and (2) provide recommendations to the Board for consideration for adoption to provide detailed guidance for the application of site-specific or non-standard operational provisions. The pilot projects and guidance shall address cumulative and planning watershed impacts, and the guidance may address the appropriate standards the site-specific or non-operational provisions shall meet. A report on the progress of the pilot projects and implementation guidance shall be presented to the Board within 18 months of the effective date of this regulation.

agencies (including NOAA Fisheries), landowners, professional consulting firms, industry, and the public. There is no compensation for service on this advisory group, but members shall be reimbursed for their expenses in attending meetings to the extent that the law allows (see DPA Travel Rules at: http://www.dpa.ca.gov/personnel-policies/travel/rules-for-excluded-employees.htm for additional information).

B. Duration

The VTAC shall be a temporary committee convened for the duration the development of at least two pilot projects and the pilot projects guidance document. The duration for this project is two years, from August 1, 2010 to July 31, 2012.

III. Structure

A. Chair and Vice Chair

The Director will appoint a chair of the VTAC. Members of the VTAC shall elect a vice chair. The vice chair shall assist the chair and conduct VTAC meetings in the chair's absence.

B. Meetings

VTAC meetings shall be duly noticed and will be open to the public, following the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act requirements. The VTAC chair shall invite public comment at specified times during a meeting. The VTAC will meet periodically as needed to complete its tasks, including the possible use of webinars (i.e., web conferencing used to conduct meetings via the Internet). The VTAC chair and CAL FIRE staff shall be responsible for determining meeting times, format, location, and duration. CAL FIRE shall provide staffing for the VTAC. Meeting minutes and agendas shall be posted on both the CAL FIRE and the BOF websites.

C. Subcommittees and Working Groups

The VTAC chair may assign individual tasks to subcommittees or working groups. Subcommittees or working groups may be formed to develop information and guidance for different aspects of the project. It is not required that subcommittee/ working group participants be members of the VTAC. Subcommittee/working groups may include, but are not limited to the topics listed below.

1. Process Development

Tasks include describing required permitting processes and other options, defining pre-consultation needs/benefits, providing coordinated documentation for the

projects, etc. (i.e., procedural steps that will be needed to be taken to allow ASP Rule section (v) pilot projects to go forward).

2. Coast Pilot Project

At least one coast pilot project shall be developed. Examples of potential projects include: (1) placement of large wood in fish-bearing watercourses using large conifers from the Core and/or Inner Zones, (2) modifying the Core, Inner, and Outer Zone boundaries based on site-specific information on dominant large wood recruitment mechanisms, landslide potential, etc., (3) modifying the stand composition of the Core and Inner Zone to restore conifer deficient areas or develop a more appropriate mixture of conifers and hardwood species (reducing overstory canopy cover but increasing nutrient inputs), (4) thinning trees in the Core and Inner Zones to accelerate conifer growth (reducing overstory canopy cover), and (5) for Class II-L watercourses, modifying the length that receive Class II-L watercourse protection measures based on mid-summer flow volumes and potential influences on water temperature in Class I watercourses.[2]

3. Inland Pilot Project

At least one inland pilot project shall be developed. Examples of potential projects include: (1) management in the Core, Inner and Outer Zones of Class I watercourses to reduce the chance of catastrophic wildfire through the use of fuel hazard reduction projects, (2) modifying the Core, Inner, and Outer Zone boundaries based on site-specific information on dominant large wood recruitment mechanisms, landslide potential, etc., (3) modifying the stand composition of the Core and Inner Zone to restore conifer deficient areas or develop a more appropriate mixture of conifers and hardwood species (reducing overstory canopy cover but increasing nutrient inputs), (4) thinning trees in the Core and Inner Zones to accelerate conifer growth (reducing overstory canopy cover), and (5) for Class II-L watercourses, modifying the length that receive Class II-L watercourse protection measures based on mid-summer flow volumes and potential influences on water temperature in Class I watercourses.

4. Context Assessment (planning watershed assessment/cumulative effects analysis)

The primary task is to provide assistance in developing a rapid watershed assessment process that can be completed cost effectively in a reasonable time frame with limited expertise. The goal will be to develop a clear assessment, evaluation, response, and monitoring process for the pilot projects and their associated THPs that takes into account both the project/site scale and the planning watershed scale, and that conform to the evaluation and informational requirements of 14 CCR § 916.9 [936.9, 956.9] subsections (v)(3) through(v)(6).

[2] See the public review draft of the NMFS Central California Coast coho salmon recovery plan for further examples of potentially appropriate pilot projects.

5. General guideline document development
The main task is to develop a general guideline document that will allow for broad application of the site-specific approach for riparian management.

IV. General Activities of the VTAC

A. Tasks

The primary tasks are described above under the subcommittee and working group descriptions. Summarizing the tasks, they are: (1) provide recommendations for the development and completion of at least one coast and one inland pilot project, (2) process facilitation development, (3) development of a workable context assessment process, including planning watershed assessment and cumulative watershed effects assessment as appropriate, and (4) development of a general guideline document that will allow broad application of the site-specific approach for riparian zone management.

B. Reports

The VTAC chair shall provide a pilot projects progress report to the Director quarterly and to the BOF in July 2011. The VTAC will present final consensus recommendations to the BOF and the Director by July 2012. Periodically, at the request of the BOF's Executive Officer (EO), the VTAC Chair shall report to the full Board on the committee's progress.

V. Assistance and Oversight

The Director may seek technical advice from other state or federal agencies and highly qualified third parties on developing pilot projects and to assist CAL FIRE in the development of the general guideline document for use in implementation of spatially explicit riparian management.

The BOF's EO will act as the liaison between the Board and the VTAC.

Additional state and federal agencies may participate with the VTAC.

VI. Timeline

August 1, 2010: VTAC established.

Summer 2010: VTAC identifies willing landowners to develop potential pilot project(s) in appropriate planning watersheds.

Summer-Fall 2010: VTAC forum coordinated with the Department and BOF (i.e., Board workshop to solicit ideas and concepts for the pilot projects).

Fall 2010: VTAC works with landowners to develop a study plan for the projects, while giving consideration to state and federal recovery plans for listed anadromous salmonids. Final selection of the appropriate planning watersheds are made.

Winter 2011: VTAC works with landowners to develop: (1) draft monitoring plans, and (2) draft approaches for addressing cumulative and planning watershed-scale impacts, and how the pilot projects will interact with these impacts.

Spring 2011: Initial field reconnaissance work takes place and THP preparation, submission, review, and project implementation progresses as appropriate, with the goal of beginning active timber operations Spring/Summer 2011.

Spring 2011: VTAC finishes a draft version of the general guideline document for the BOF regarding the development and implementation of the site specific/spatially explicit riparian management (SERM) approach.

July 2011: VTAC chair presents a pilot projects progress report to the BOF.

Summer 2011 to Spring 2012: VTAC tracks progress to ensure that the pilot projects are properly implemented on the ground.

July 2012: VTAC chair presents the interim/final pilot projects report to the BOF.

July 31, 2012: VTAC decommissioned.