

CALFED Conservation Strategy

Staff Team Meeting Notes

February 4, 1999

1:00 to 4:00 PM

These meeting notes summarize major topics of discussion. At the request of Ron Rempel, a presentation by Peter Stine on how CMARP will address the Conservation Strategy was added to the agenda. The attendance list and a list of upcoming meetings are included at the end of these notes.

1. Report on Policy Team Meeting of 1/27/99

- GIS: Ray McDowell will be acting as GIS coordinator for all of CALFED. He will find out what data layers are available and evaluate how to meet the needs of the Conservation Strategy. JSA will provide technical assistance. The first priority is preparing maps to illustrate species occurrences and range. Second, there is a need both for maps of Stage 1 activities and for maps illustrating conservation measures. The Policy Team committed to providing maps for those two priority levels. The CMARP team is also developing an initiative for its GIS needs, but shouldn't duplicate Ray's efforts. Better vegetation maps than it has at present are needed.
- Assurances: No decisions were made.
- Definition of highest priority Stage 1 actions: These were not identified.

2. CMARP and the Conservation Strategy (presentation by Peter Stine, USGS)

The monitoring strategy has to be linked to specific goals:

- (a) What will be measured?
- (b) When and how often will it be measured?
- (c) What will be done with the data that are gathered?

The CMARP, like the Conservation Strategy, looks at three classes of taxa: R, r, and m.

"R" species require tailored monitoring plans. These are fairly complete for fish, but much more is needed for non-fish species. They are asking species experts for input. CMARP will also include monitoring that is already in place for some species, such as programs run by PRBO or USFWS.

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How to treat "r" species is ill-defined now and developing the necessary monitoring plans may take significant effort. It may be possible to roll habitat measures together, but there will be some monitoring focused on species. Developing the monitoring plan for r species will be an on-going process.

For "m" species, the monitoring strategy will revolve around a habitat GIS that can be used to track habitat change and trends in those changes. There will be some species-specific monitoring that will focus on population surveys and analysis. All listed species in this category will require population-level monitoring.

Monitoring for the Conservation Strategy and ERP should be done together.

Some CMARP issues relevant to the Conservation strategy:

- a. GIS: identify what data are needed; find out what data are available; identify holes in the available data and how much it will cost to fill the holes, taking into account the need for spatial resolution and thematic detail.
- b. Monitoring Requirements for Terrestrial Species: There are specific requirements for terrestrial species, and these should interface with monitoring for aquatic species.
- c. Monitoring of Watershed Programs: This must be done. There may be an opportunity to partner with the Consumnes Watershed Group.

Final Observations: CMARP will be finalized at the end of February. It mainly deals with terrestrial species. CMARP must prioritize; the effort is too big to accomplish everything. The goal is to measure things that will inform decision that must be made during the next seven years. ERP and Conservation Strategy will differ when it comes to compliance monitoring.

Peter requested information about which species need population monitoring and which can be covered by habitat monitoring. That information will come out of the species experts meetings. By 2/26/99 Jeff Single and Kevin Shaffer will provide the list of species that need population monitoring to Peter Stine.

3. Report on Species Experts Meetings of 1/27/99 and 2/3/99

The experts were provided with species accounts. They were asked to review the species accounts, provide conservation measures necessary to meet the species goals, and describe the monitoring needed to evaluate the success of the conservation measures. Considerable valuable information has been provided, but it is fragmentary. Also, many of the experts are reluctant to provide information in writing, but prefer to review material prepared by others. This makes the sessions less productive than

members of the Staff Team had hoped. In particular, programmatic mitigation measures are not forthcoming, so compiling the information into a useful form will be difficult.

The conservation measures will be taken from recovery plans and programmatic biological opinions unless they are already in the ERP.

One big question: Will the conservation measures have for "significant impact" when analyzed in the EIS/EIR? The general opinion of the Staff Team was that they would not. To make sure that the EIS/EIR team has information that they need, Danae Aitchison and Marti Kie will set up a meeting with Rick Breitenbach's team.

4. Review of Schedule and Writing Assignments

The following changes to the schedule were made:

- One week has been added to the schedule for preparation of the Habitat Evaluation Tables. This change causes a similar day in the preparation of the impact assessment and description of the conservation measures (Chapter 5 of the Conservation Strategy). The information provided by the species experts will take more time to analyze than was expected.
- Two weeks have been added to the schedule for preparation of Chapter 7: Process for Compliance with ESA, CESA, and NCCPA. The attorneys from CALFED, USFWS, and CDFG are working on this chapter, but need more information about the scope of the Conservation Strategy, which in turn depends on policy decisions that have not been made by the Policy Team.
- Four weeks have been added to the schedule for preparation of Chapter 10: Assurances. This chapter cannot be prepared until decisions on what assurances should be included are made by the Policy Team.

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5. Work in Progress: A Discussion

The following issues were raised by the Staff Team:

- What level of detail is appropriate for the description of CALFED Actions included in the Conservation Strategy? After some discussion, it was agreed that the current summary is too brief. There should be just enough detail to provide context for the impact analysis and the conservation measures. Also, the Conservation Strategy should be a stand-alone document that makes sense without frequent reference to the EIS/EIR.
- How will service area impacts be handled? It would be easier to not address this issue, but that is not an option given the need to have NEPA and CEQA compliance for incidental take authorization for CALFED actions. The indirect, delayed, off-site impacts of actions must be analyzed. That includes service area impacts when the action is water delivery.
- What will be the term of the Conservation Strategy? Will it be a one-time document or updated as conservation measures change with adaptive management?
- What actions does CALFED plan to implement soon after the Biological Opinion is issued? Since the Conservation Strategy will not provide take authorization, preparation of the Biological Assessments for those actions must start soon to obtain take authorization in a timely manner. The first step in preparing the Biological Assessment for each action is to describe the action in sufficient detail to determine its impacts.
- Will any take authorizations be issued as a result of the programmatic Biological Opinion? No, but the goal is a no jeopardy opinion.
- Which species will be covered by the Biological Opinion? There are species being evaluated in the Conservation Strategy for which no take authorization will be requested. As the Conservation Strategy nears completion, it will be necessary to divide the evaluated species into two lists: those that will be covered by the Biological Opinion and those that will not.
- The species list may need adjusting. It is being reviewed by staff and species experts. Any changes, either of commission or omission, will be identified by 2/17/99. Jeff Single and Kevin Shaffer will review it and make recommendations.

6. Action Items

- Jeff Single and Mike Fris will develop the list of reviewers for their respective agencies (carried over from previous meeting because of an agenda change)
- Jeff Single and Kevin Shaffer will schedule a meeting with Rick Breitenbach's EIS/EIR team to find out what that team needs from the Conservation Strategy team.
- Jeff Single and Kevin Shaffer will suggest revisions to the species list by 2/17/99.

Attendance at 2/4/99 Staff Team Meeting

Marina Brand, CDFG
Danae Aitchison, AG
Scott Cantrell, CDFG
Paul Cylinder, JSA
Michael Fris, USFWS

Sandy Goldman, Toyon
Marti Kie, CALFED
Kevin Shaffer, CDFG
Peter Stine, USGS
Jeff Single, CDFG via phone

Up-coming Meetings

The Staff Team will meet:

Tuesday 804	February 16, 1999	9 AM to Noon	Resources Building Room
Tuesday 804	March 2, 1999	9 AM to Noon	Resources Building Room

The Policy Team will meet:

Friday	February 26, 1999	9:30 AM to Noon	Resources Building
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Note: The 2/12/99 meeting was cancelled. There may be an attempt to reschedule it.
