

**BDAC Ecosystem Restoration Work Group
Meeting Summary
December 18, 1996**

The ninth meeting of the BDAC Ecosystem Work Group was held on Wednesday December 18, 1996 at the State Water Resource Control Building from 9:00 a.m. to noon.

(Some attendees who arrived late and/or who did not sign in are not listed below)

BDAC members of the Work Group present were:

Mary Selkirk (Chair) Stuart Pyle
Ann Notthoff

Invited Participants of the Work Group present were:

Nat Bingham	Gary Bobker	Pete Chadwick
Rod Fujita	Kate Hansel	Jeff Jaraczski
Bruce Herbold	Pete Rhoads	Sally Shanks
Frank Wernette		

CALFED Staff/Consultant Team present were:

Dick Daniel	Cindy Darling	Sharon Gross
Eugenia Laycheck	Jim Martin	Rick Soehren
Greg Young	Ray McDowell	

Other Attendees:

Neal Berkquist	Liz Howard	B.J. Miller
David Briggs	Jan Jennings	Joe Miyamoto
Annalena Bronson	Lance Johnson	Jeff Phipps
John Coburn	Robert Koenigs	Larry Puckett
Bill DuBois	Marnie Kragan	Robin Reynolds
Bellory Fong	Peter L. Candy	Kelly Tennis
Steve Hirsch	John Marlowski	

Several draft documents were distributed to the Work Group at the start of the meeting, including
1) *Prototypes: Vision for the Sacramento River Ecological Zone and Vision for Chinook Salmon*

2) *Revised Ecosystem Roundtable Mission Statement*, 3) *Goals and Objectives* and 4) *Appendix 14. CALFED Ecosystem Quality Objectives - Sacramento River Ecological Zone*.

Coordination with Ecosystem Roundtable Activities

Mary Selkirk, the Work Group chair, opened the meeting and asked Cindy Darling to provide a summary describing the mission, goals, and objectives of the Ecosystem Roundtable. Several Work Group members had expressed concern at the last meeting that there was overlap between goals of the BDAC Work Group and the Ecosystem Roundtable. The Ecosystem Roundtable will concentrate on developing near-term restoration priorities, consistent with the development of the long-term Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan (ERPP). These near-term restoration activities are the Category III efforts that were part of the Bay-Delta Accord. The role of the BDAC Work Group is to provide a forum for discussion of policy issues relative to development of the long-term ERPP. The Roundtable will focus on setting priorities for implementation of near-term projects that will help achieve the long-term ERPP goals. The Roundtable will also provide a coordination mechanism for existing ecosystem restoration programs such as CVPIA to be integrated with CALFED. In addition, the Roundtable will provide advice to CALFED regarding the use of the funding appropriated under Proposition 204 for the State share of Category II funding. The Roundtable is working to ensure that projects implemented are consistent with the overall CALFED approach and the long-term solution.

A question was raised regarding the role of the Roundtable in securing Federal funding for ecosystem activities. There is a need, it was expressed, to make sure federal appropriation efforts do not get ahead of the CALFED process, that appropriations should not become project specific at this time.

A question was also raised as to how CEQA/NEPA compliance will be satisfied by the projects being approved by the Roundtable. Cindy made it clear that each project proponent will be responsible for preparing necessary environmental documentation. Additionally, projects would only be considered if they do not limit the choice of a reasonable range of alternatives or affect the selection of a preferred alternative. It was stated that this is not envisioned as a role of the Roundtable and environmental documents would be available through normal public review processes. The Roundtable is also working on permit coordination issues, a key part of facilitating early implementation of projects. A draft proposal on permit coordination will be available for discussion in the near future.

Targets and Rationale

Mary asked Dick Daniel to provide an overview of an example vision statement for the ERRP. Dick said that the draft (or prototype) is conceptual in nature and asked that comments be focused on how well it portrays information rather than on the information. It was proposed that

“visions” would be prepared for each of 14 geographic ecological zones as well as for several specific species, habitat types, and stressors. The draft outlines a method envisioned for sorting the ERPP targets into three categories:

- Targets that have sufficient scientific basis, solid scientific agreement, and stakeholder and agency support for quick implementation;
- Targets that meet CALFED ecosystem restoration objectives but which need to be implemented on a conservative basis and monitored to determine future implementation levels; and
- Targets that require scientific substantiation prior to developing levels for implementation

The intent of these categories is to help prioritize and develop implementation strategies for identified targets. This idea of categorizing targets had general support from the Work Group. Although, there was discussion over how prioritization would occur and if the target category definitions were appropriate. The draft discussion paper also includes methods to present ecological processes in the specific ecological zone and discusses how targets in each zone help meet overall objectives. Comments regarding the targets and implementation objectives included:

- CALFED staff may want to use a description of risk as a measure of determining whether a target will help meet objective goals. This would be an exercise in determining the certainty of actions. However, there may be cases where actions are implemented even if science has not “caught up” and certainty is not well known. In such cases, efforts to split funding sources among research and implementation is necessary. Also, research actions will be listed specifically for some of the targets to help science catch up where needed.
- Actions should be measured against some goal or performance level. To help provide some assurance to stakeholders, work is underway to link actions to objectives by providing rationale. For example, “In order to accomplish increased levels of spring run salmon to ...by screening ..., etc”, with the “by” term linking action to objective.
- Actions and objectives should be kept separate. The process needs to focus on what objectives it wants to accomplish before it categorizes targets. High levels of stakeholder support should not be used to influence the categorization of targets. Otherwise, it would imply that stakeholder support is equivalent to scientific basis. Simply because stakeholders support an idea does not mean that it is scientifically justified or appropriate for our vision. Such viewpoints, though, should be considered during implementation phases.
- How targets are categorized could have significant policy implications. Categorization has the potential to be unifying or divisive, depending on how targets are interpreted and categorized.
- The intent of this approach is to disclose to everyone the perceived level of certainty of how some actions will help meet the objectives. It also is intended to portray the need and

usefulness for adaptive management for those targets placed in the second and third categories.

- The type of targets (qualitative vs. quantitative) will reflect a level of certainty.
- Targets and principles need to promote positive responses in the ecosystem and not strive to reinforce the status-quo.

There was a specific question raised regarding implementation of meanderbelts. Will meanderbelts be allowed to create themselves in an uncontrolled manner? If so, this could go against the efforts of other agencies to protect life and property. Dick responded that meanderbelts would be controlled such that they only meander in particular areas and in certain natural or leveed barriers. In addition, CALFED does not have the authority to override the decisions of agencies charged with protecting life and property nor has the intention to create such risks.

Discussions on Prototype Vision Statements

With regard to the third bullet on page 5 of the Sacramento River vision, concern was expressed that returning to historic conditions is not always in the best interest of other aspects of the ecosystem that have developed under current conditions. The intent should be to restore natural processes not historic conditions.

There was also questions raised regarding the potential of focusing on only a few species and having restoration plans or visions that are biased to other species. Dick responded that in most instances, efforts will be made to look at all species and habitats within specified areas. That is the value of defining geographic ecological zones. However, many particular species are of critical importance because their recovery is driven by regulations, such as the Endangered Species Act. A suggestion was offered to include "sideboards" that limited the extent of implementation of particular actions. This would reduce the potential negative impact some targets might have on other targets.

Dick stated that drafts of all vision statements (currently estimated at a total of 80) should be completed prior to the March 10th BDAC meeting. However, there is a lot of work still to be done. The purpose for presenting the draft Sacramento River and Chinook Salmon visions at this meeting was to give Work Group members a chance to comment on the conceptual framework of this approach. This will help CALFED staff refine the presentation of the visions.

Dick then gave the Work Group an overview of the concept behind the Chinook Salmon vision and emphasized that comments be focused on the method for presentation of visions rather the content of the vision.

It was stated by one member that this vision framework is good. However, it is the vision of one particular group and is subjective to the bias of whomever is drafting the vision. There is concern that inclusion of commercial fisheries harvest as a primary stressor will result in actions that restrict fishing industry, regardless of whether it's necessary or not. The concern is that CALFED might make decisions without input by forums that are deeply involved with discussing harvest management. There is a need for better communications between CALFED and such other forums.

This concern was echoed generally by others in that page 2 of the salmon vision document did not provide reasons or rationale for inclusion or exclusion of factors that cause salmon decline. It was further stated that there is a need for making priority decisions regarding what actions have the most benefit and are most feasible. It was felt that there was no method for discrimination among actions. Dick responded to these concerns by stating that this is a programmatic level analysis and the comparison of specific actions will happen during Phase III of the CALFED program. This was supported with a statement that the decision to implement particular actions could be handled by the Roundtable and that this effort should stay focused at the objective, programmatic level. Dick stated that there is also work being done to provide a "why" with each action listed to accompany the "what" and "how much". Efforts are also underway to coordinate with more technical experts (including the recent round of ecosystem restoration technical workshops).

Some members of the Work Group were concerned with the vast number of visions being proposed. It was felt that too many visions could diminish the power that a typical vision statement would have. It was not being suggested that CALFED staff reduce the amount of information, but rather recast some of the information in a different manner. There was also concern expressed about writing visions for some ecosystem stressors. It was felt that this might unfairly point to particular causes and move people away from focusing on restoration objectives. It was suggested that text on stressors be rewritten with a positive rather than a negative emphasis.

Some members of the Work Group asked for better coordination with other agency experts and technical experts outside of public agencies. Some felt there are opportunities to bring in valuable expertise to help draft visions and determine viability of some targets. Some agency staff requested to be more involved with the development of these visions and categorization of targets. A request was made to develop a different process to highlight interests or concerns earlier rather than later.

With regard to coordination with technical experts, Dick referenced work being done by Boating and Waterways Agency to evaluate habitat impact of boating. However, according to one Work Group member who is involved in this effort, the Boating and Waterways Agency is limiting its effort to a survey regarding the need for additional recreational facilities which does not address

habitat impacts. Therefore, specific needs for information should be identified by CALFED and forwarded to these agencies to investigate. This thought was echoed by another member of the group but in regard to lack of incentives for agencies to research particular issues. There is a tendency to maintain status-quo because there is no incentive to do research on a particular stressor or particular species until a crisis develops (e.g., potential ESA listing for a particular species stimulates more research). There needs to be more effort placed on proactive research and investigations. On the other hand, too much emphasis placed on the need for scientific basis prior to implementation could act as a disincentive to moving forward.

A suggestion was made to include more references to other programs happening outside of CALFED. Dick responded that a document has been drafted regarding this and is being reviewed internally. This document will be presented to the Work Group for discussion at the next meeting.

Appendix 14 - Ecosystem Quality Objectives - Sacramento River Ecological Zone

Discussion then turned to the draft Ecosystem Quality Objectives - Sacramento River Ecological Zone. This appendix presents how the definition and objectives of each ecological zone will be described. Discussion by the group was limited to concern over the use of dilution water to help reduce concentrations of pollutants in the Sacramento River. Water user interests maintain that the Bureau of Reclamation has done this in the past and the associated water has not been allowed to be recovered downstream. When not recovered downstream, this water results in economic impacts. Dick commented that the CALFED staff views dilution as a secondary measure for reducing pollutants. Source control would be the primary action.

Next Meetings

The next meetings were set for the following dates (last Wednesday of each month):

- January 29, 1997
- February 26, 1997
- March 26, 1997

The January meeting will include discussion and comment on two issues:

- integration of CALFED ecosystem vision with existing programs; and
- coordinated permitting of ecosystem restoration activities.