

TRINITY RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL

Mission Statement

To protect, enhance, restore and revitalize the watershed through collaborative efforts that leverage external resources, work toward common goals, educate and engage community stakeholders, address natural resource issues, and support healthy ecosystems for future generations.

Meeting Notes

Tuesday September 24, 2019

TCRCD Conference Room, #20 Horseshoe Lane, Suite 2B, Weaverville

10:00 am – 12:30 pm

In attendance:

Amelia Fleitz (TCRCD); Josh Smith (WRTC); David Schmerge (USFS); Marie Petersen (Down River Consulting); Anna Hall (Down River Consulting); Bob Morris (SAFE); Cindy Buxton (WRTC); Sandra Perez (5Cs); Samantha Chilcote (TC Fish and Game Commission), Tracy McFadin (TCRCD).

1. Introductions

2. Additions/Changes

3. Trinity County Cannabis Program CEQA Update – Marie Petersen

Trinity County released Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the Commercial Cannabis Program. Marie said it was not written with enough Trinity County data, has a narrow range of alternatives, includes inaccurate data, and would reduce the number of farms. More public meetings will be held. She feels it was written with a bias toward legal cannabis grows being the problem, rather than illegal grows being the problem. Later this week the Planning Commission will be holding a meeting in Hayfork and an October meeting in Weaverville. Trinity County Planning Dept. staff report is available online, as is the DEIR. Marie feels that sections need to be rewritten. Only accepting written public comment, they are not accepting verbal comments at the meetings.

General discussion: Bob has seen permitted grows not coming into environmental compliance, has brought issues to the planning department and not gotten anyone to address the issues and hasn't seen enforcement. Bob thinks that the planning department is only dealing with enforcement on non-licensed grows. Marie felt that some aren't as good as others, but the majority are fixing problems, site visits are showing improvements, recommended checking to find out if the problem properties are actually licensed. There are massive amounts of additional wells being punched in causing water problems. Sam feels that a successful program needs to address the range (in environmental compliance). Marie said more growers are coming forward after being cited for violations for help, CA Fish and Wildlife are sending out letters of non-compliance, targeting biggest violators. Amelia said Mendocino and other counties are using sustainable Program developed by RCDs, including onsite assessments to determine if they are meeting the program standards and meeting county enviro codes. CARCD is funding this currently so free to landowners. This is not yet available in Trinity County. Marie said many growers do not have the resources to pay for consultants. Josh said NRCS is not allowed to do cannabis property support or technical assistance. Marie said Trinity Pines and Barker Creek areas need roads inventories, there are so many sediment issues, systemic problem not being fixed by property becoming licensed. Josh said it has been an issue for a long time, USFS is not maintaining some of their system roads. Marie said many roads are considered "closed" on the Forest Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM), even though they are not physically closed and are being used. Dave said there is little to no funding or staffing on the Forest for road maintenance. If a road is included in a NEPA project area, funding may become available, but if no vegetation management project in the area there is no funding for roads.

Cindy said Trinity Pines could set up a road association, could there be a licensing fee to help fund road associations? David said if a maintenance level 1 road, accessible property owners can complain. Have the roads been designated closed but they shouldn't be closed, if they are part of the Forest road system they should be maintained. Report problems to the Forest engineer. Q? What is the criteria used for road maintenance prioritization? Dave said fire, hydrology, watershed legacy sediment sources, etc. but if not part of a NEPA process, he is not sure. Josh said if it is post fire or post storm they tend to get fixed, under state of emergency. Tracy said RCD is not being allowed to do road work under Burned Area Emergency Response projects with the Forest. RCD is only able to bring in match funding to do work on NEPA cleared areas. Josh said Forest Grants and Agreements is shutting down the ability to get partner organization grants and agreements. Bob suggested that it be an agenda item for the Trinity County Collaborative Group, it might help to elevate the issue to the regional office level, he said working with Six Rivers NF has been very different experience than working with Shasta Trinity NF.

4. Program work/updates/news

- Bureau of Land Management (BLM)-*no representative in attendance*
- CA Dept. Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) *no representative in attendance*
- Hoopa Tribe *no representative in attendance*
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) *no representative in attendance*
- Trinity River Restoration Program (TRRP) *no representative in attendance*
- **The Watershed Research and Training Center (WRTC)**
- **Trinity County Fish and Game Advisory Commission(TCFG)**
- Trinity County Board of Supervisors (TCBOS) *no representative in attendance*
- **Trinity County RCD**
- **US Forest Service (USFS)**
- Yurok Tribe *no representative in attendance*

5 Counties Salmonid Conservation Program (5Cs) –Sandra Perez: Main focus has been East Weaver Dam Removal design project and BLM Deadwood Watershed sediment reduction work. Also the Sydney Gulch Fish Passage design project continues (at Forest Service compound), but the underground diesel tank contamination discovered has slowed the project, testing required. Original project idea was to take concrete out of channel. Also working on Manzanita Creek Barrier Project, Water Reliability Project (East Weaver and Browns Creek areas), Little Browns Creek design project (with RCD) to address old power poles in riparian corridor, and Instream Sydney Gulch project.

Trinity County Fish and Game Commission-Samantha Chilcote: The Trinity County Fish and Game Commission has three vacant seats, Trinity County residents interested in hunting and fishing can put in a letter of interest for application. They meet four times a year, work with state commission and Trinity County BOS, Southern Trinity County representation lacking. Contact Tina Duong, trinityfishandgamecommission@gmail.com.

The Watershed Research Training Center-Josh Smith: Projects include 1) Riparian Native Pollinator Project with the RCD, Hayfork Creek, need shade for temperature issues; 2) Working with Ranchers on water transactions and fish passage issues, hoping to add water and improve diversions; 3) Post project monitoring of S. Fork Trinity River Heliwood Project (with Yurok Tribe), identifying what worked and what didn't, using drone photos, digital elevation models, cross sections and profile surveys, reach scouring, feature changes, before and after log positions (GPS'd), macro invertebrate data (will be reporting out next year); 4) Indian Valley Creek Restoration Planning project coming up, need LiDAR, (Side discussion that Six Rivers NF has

programmatic NEPA for restoration work but Shasta Trinity NF does not); 5) Salt Creek Project Phase I or larger project (at old Mill Site), trying to get funding to raise channel for ground water reconnection; 6) Watershed Steward Program members start mid- Oct, will have fisheries concentration, available to help if others can take them out to see other projects; 7) Stream Flow Monitoring continuing with Water Board, good water year, flows have been higher; 8) Trespass Grow Reclamation work (with IERC and RCD), a lot of good cleanup work getting done. Multi-Agency field visit to discuss procedure to streamline getting hazardous and banned pesticides substances off the Forest. Carbofuran is highly toxic and can be taken up by plants and trees, so no cutting or chipping is allowed if it is found. IERC will be doing a presentation to the Trinity County Collaborative Group. Discussion about safety training for the crews and which organizations have haz-mat training.

Down River Consulting –Marie Petersen: Working on all types of permitting, restoration, remediation for violations, Fish and Wildlife permitting, 401 permits, culvert and bridge projects. Water Board will be doing site visits this winter. Question about how many other consultants are offering services? Maries said there are usually a couple of others operating in the county.

USFS –David Schmerge: Current large planning projects include Dubakella Plantations Insect and Disease Project CE (decision is pending, might be implementing next year including treating legacy sites); Trinity County Collaborative Group Roads and Plantations Pilot Project EA decision might be in May next year; Burnt Ranch Fire Resiliency Community Project EIS and Trinity Alps Prescribed Fire EA still in process. Smaller projects include Headwaters Restoration- Shell Mountain (in the upper SFTR watershed), decision signed for restoration of legacy sediment sites. They do not have funding for implementation. National Fish Wildlife Foundation funding is being awarded to the RCD to do some road work on the STNF, might be a source of future funding. There is no fisheries biologist on the west side of the forest, and biologist at the Supervisor's Office will be retiring this year. He would also like to see a small restoration project in the Shell Mountain Creek, temperatures are the highest ever recorded, there is grazing in the fire area and riparian reveg not growing back and providing shade. NEPA might be done for cattle exclusion fencing and revegetation. Also Beaver Dam Analogs NEPA has not been done, a Biological Assessment would be required.

Trinity County RCD – Amelia Flietz-RCD and Watershed Center are looking at providing Third Party NEPA for Six Rivers and maybe Shasta-Trinity NF projects. Planning projects include streamflow enhancement project areas West Weaver Creek water district Diversion upgrade and on Little Browns Creek BLM lands. Upcoming agreement with NFWF Sediment reduction, road maintenance and upgrade. Trinity River Cleanup Event coordinated by RCD (in partnership with FS with TRRP support) was a huge success. Next year the BLM will be a partner.

Safe Alternatives for our Forest Environment (SAFE) –Bob Morris: Helped get Caltrans to not do herbicide spraying along Trinity County roadsides.

TCRCD does not currently have funding to coordinate the Watershed Council. Josh suggested that we rotate who chairs meeting (and puts out agenda/minutes), offered to chair next meeting. Bob suggested that the meetings start at 9 am instead of 10 am, group in favor.

Next Meeting: December 10th, 9 am.

Meeting Adjourned at 12:30 pm.