

TBWCC Steering Committee Meeting

10.25.19

Kings River Conservation District | 1pm-4pm

In attendance:

Carole Combs (TBWP)

Rob Hansen (TBWP)

John Austin (TBWP)

Bruce Roberts (TBWP)

Denise Kadara (TBWP)

Kayode Kadara (TBWP)

Safeeq Khan (UCM SNRI)

Erin Tennant (CDFW)

Larry Saslaw (TBWP)

Jesse Bahm (NRCS)

Richard Harriman (Harriman Law, TBWP)

Sarah Campe (SNC)

Martha Davis (formerly: Mono Lake Ctte, Inland Empire Utilities Agency)

Steve Haze (Sierra RCD)

Matt Hurley (WM Pros, McMullan Area GSA, TBWP)

Bob Wilkinson (UCSB Bren School for the Environment)

Kevin Wright – (Marin Co. Parks, One Tam, CA Landscape Stewardship Network)

Robert Gould – Facilitator (Ag Innovations)

Soua Lee (KRCD)

Paul Peschel (KRCD)

Dezaraye Bagalayos – Notetaker (TBWP)

On the phone:

Soapy Mullholland (SRT)

Adam Livingston (SRT)

Julie Allen (SRT)

Introductions

Meeting Overview

Convened by the TBWP under an SCE grant in 2014 and led by Michelle Selmon of DWR, the TBWCC held quarterly meetings that were attended primarily by water-focused folks.

In 2017 the TBWCC hosted the Headwaters to Groundwater Symposium that was attended by 50-60 people at the Tulare SCE Energy Education Center.

Throughout this time the overall goal was “How can we do more good together that we cannot do individually or as a small group?”

When Michelle Selmon left DWR the TBWCC was left at a crossroads. As we moved forward with the idea of expanding the TBWCC into a Tulare Basin-wide watershed collaborative we did research on other collaboratives that had formed in California, one of them being OneTam.

Matt Hurley brought the core group together for the day.

Matt is experienced in bringing collaboratives together and getting people from different places in the same room. This group needs to be landscape scale with a good governance structure.

Robert advised that the group work together, not focus on differences, and emphasized the importance of building trust. He said there are already strong relationships in the room and that is a good thing which can take months or years to create.

Agenda Overview

The facilitator’s role for meeting/group success is to manage and balance:

- Results
- Process
- Relationship

Robert advised: “No attributions. If you are expressing a concern it is very important to express the *why* of that concern. Put important yet not pressing issues on the ‘Bike Rack’. Those ideas/concerns/thoughts can be addressed at a later date by the meeting conveners.”

The Case for a Tulare Basin Collaborative

Sarah made the opening case statement: This very personal for me. I grew up here, have family roots, and have worked in the Sierra Nevada for a long time. We have over 129 million dead trees in the Sierra and a severely over-drafted West side. Our stories are aligned. Our upper watersheds and floodplains need to connect and coordinate, work together. Projects need to be done. Approach this collaboration cautiously; don’t take on everything at once.

Sarah continued: Valley people need to know and be involved in what is happening in our headwaters. What is happening up there affects everything that happens on the Valley floor.

Matt added: The Symposium showed us, and SGMA people know more and more, how important our headwaters are and how important it is to make investments in our upper watersheds.

Comments:

- Only a quarter of our Valley water comes from the Sierra headwaters; hope Valley interests aren't pinning their dreams of more water on the headwaters. Research shows there is no new water to be had there.
- Hope Valley Ag-rich counties will help finance projects happening in the Southern Sierra.

Hopes and Concerns

Robert then paired attendees up to brainstorm "Hopes" and "Concerns" for the new Collaborative, as indicated below.

Hopes:

- Keep watershed healthy in the face of massive tree die off; need for more a more functional watershed (which is a healthier one)
- Shared Vision of an integrated watershed (upper and lower)
- Common agreement on the "common good"
- Create pearls: build off the past efforts, current ideas to make something of real value
- Help be a voice for all
- Maximize common good, aligning our organizations and others
- Reach beyond our core group; seek to reduce/prevent conflict
- Engage those under-represented
 - lasting involvement of park and forest service
- Create and see on-the-ground improvements
- Better shared information and data to build shared understanding of the systems we want to protect, steward (reconcile differing facts)
- bring in people who have been historically left out
- get buy-in and participation from upper watershed folks
- outreach and education
- Get comfortable with the discomfort of doing things in a whole new way; in other words, increase comfort level trying new things

Concerns:

- Time limitation to communicate the urgency of the situation in terms of climate, over-drafting of water, ecological damage, and what the solutions are.
 - Outreach - changing hearts and minds - takes time
 - There's a shortage of information out there for the public

- There's a sense that people/organizations are hungry to help and to help the Tulare Basin Watershed knowing how vulnerable and important it is to CA
- Large agencies in siloes, which is perpetuated by there being in a constant state of emergency, just reacting, not proactive.
- Have capacity collectively, but need shared commitment
 - failure can't be an option
 - how fast can we act as a change agent?
 - how can we create results and make progress quickly (knowing that this gives confidence to ourselves and others)
- There are ideologies, in the heightened political climate, that are in the way as well... not easily changed
- Duplication of effort: are we adding value to work already being done or not?
 - How do we know what others are doing? What functions are handled by others? Need to 'map out' others' efforts, other collaborations.
- Avoid non-constructive redundancy:
 - build upon what is already being done
 - be careful not to "muscle out" others' efforts; step on their toes; be inclusive
- (Facilitator note: some redundancy of projects, efforts, and organizations is healthy, as in nature)
- Be clear on what do we have to offer that adds value. The role of coordinator, network builder,

A few participants pushed back on the "avoid redundancy" concern, saying that redundancy *can* be good because approaches will be different with results having a varying degree of success. These participants expressed the view that it is Important to have different minds working on the same issues and find a balance. *Maybe not worry about redundancy of projects so much as redundancy of approaches?*

Guest Speakers

Kevin Wright – Marin Co. Parks, One Tam, CA Landscape Stewardship Network

Kevin presented a powerpoint on the Tamalpais Lands Collaborative -- One Tam [powerpoint included as an attachment with these meeting notes]. One Tam is a collaborative composed of five partner agencies – Marin Municipal Water District, National Park Service Golden Gate National Recreation Area, California State Parks Bay Area District, Mark County Parks, and the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy.

- This was a multi-year endeavor. The first few years we had to hunker down; there was not much to show for the work but that work of building relationships and trust *had* to be done. It's difficult to show that value in the first couple of

years.” He “understands that that is what we’ve been contending with as well, but we have good relationships and trust.

- There absolutely must be trust and connectivity driven by a core team with a shared culture. Everyone must be on board; even one lukewarm participant can derail building trust/relationships/collaboration.
- The collaborative absolutely must be financially and otherwise transparent. When you are working with lots of different agencies *and* serving communities you must be transparent.
- Approaches can include MOUs, five - year strategies, and cooperative agreements. It depends on how you form your governance structure, but there are options. It’s important to show all the work and be able to produce something.
- One Tam surveyed their members as well as community members over five years to be able to demonstrate the impact of working collaboratively. Tracking the impacts of their work was a new approach. The results show in the social impacts from sizable increases in partner trust, community connectivity, the sharing of equipment and skill sets, increased work morale, increase in new funders, etc.
- Building a collaborative is hard work, and all those involved must be dedicated. A smaller dedicated core would lead to a stronger foundation than a big group of people who are in and out.
- The work that the collaborative takes on is work that is important and already being done by those participating. This cannot be viewed as a hobby; the work you do in the collaborative must be connected to work already being done.

Martha Davis – Mono Lake/Inland Empire Utilities Agency

Martha started out working on Mono Lake issues. She emphasized:

- Everything starts with love of place. When we have a love of place that is facing big issues people can start to feel stuck when no one can agree on approaches/solutions. It’s important to avoid win/lose situations, important to avoid competition.
- Watershed framing is preferable to artificial jurisdictional boundaries.
- We must look at how everything connects to one another. We have to work with nature to achieve ecological health.

- Experts have a particular kind of approach where they know what needs to be done and have a hard time seeing beyond what they think they know.
- It's important to go to the people who aren't necessarily decision-makers. It's with those people who may not have big answers to big problems but have more holistic approaches to the smaller issues that create the bigger issues. We must do the work to reach out and include those people.
- Decide-Advocate-Defend (DAD) is an approach that must be avoided.
- We tend to put more weight on built solutions rather than distributed solutions.

Bob Wilkinson – UC Santa Barbara Bren School for the Environment

Bob has worked with both corporations and nonprofits. He emphasized:

- Must develop empathy, including empathy for the plight of corporations and empathy for stakeholders that are part of the watershed and likely necessary for generating large-scale, lasting solutions.
- Must start with agreed-upon facts in order to bring a collaborative to reality.
- Focus on multiple benefits: identify, quantify, and attach value. Doing so allows different stakeholders to derive different values from a given initiative: some care about water quality or quantity, others climate/carbon sequestration benefits, forest/ecosystem health or resiliency, or economic development or job creation.

Taking the Steps

Comments:

- We've had this same meeting, same discussion several times now, we need to decide what to do.
- At the [August 28] Steering Committee conference call to prepare for this meeting, we discussed the need to plan for strategic recruitment of additional core participants in this collaborative.
- We may need a structure, we must define the function of the collaborative. What are we going to *do*? What about a charter? Mission? Goals?
- What do we want this group to do? We don't want redundancy, we don't want to step on toes, we don't want to horn in on what others are already

doing. What will this group do that's different from what all the other groups are doing?

- What is the gap we will fill?
- We need to do a gap analysis. This is something we have talked about doing several times.
- Another gap is love of place; we can help to develop a love and sense of place through continued outreach and education.
- **There is a need for overall watershed coordination.**
- How do we affect policy? Our projects are great, but if we aren't having an effect on policy then what will our projects/work ultimately come to?
- We have to meet the needs of all of us; what are our emergent priorities?
- Many in the room question how we can even go about creating a governance structure without knowing the scope of the work.
- We should look at what TNC is spearheading on the Feather River in Yuba County – the French Meadows Project.” [Live links to this information sent on 10.28.2019 to meeting attendees, forwarded on 10.29.2018 to callers-in and included as a separate item with the cover message to these notes.]
- The entire watershed view is critical.
- We should hold several small meetings in the next few months . . . just talking about what different organizations and agencies need. Basically start mapping out and developing a gaps analysis for water/natural resource agencies in the Tulare Basin. What do they need to better do the work they are doing?

There was general participant agreement regarding not making a decision on governance structures at this meeting but definitely moving forward on meetings to begin a gaps analysis and go from there. Some of those meetings could involve all or subgroups to work on different elements: examples could include one on drafting mission and vision, another focused on researching existing or emerging solutions or projects in the upper watershed and valley.

Chartered Meeting Notes [prepared by Robert]

General comments not otherwise noted:

- Need shared facts on water sources and relative volumes of water

- Recognize the Valley floor as an economic engine that needs the upper watershed to be fully functional; need to invest in it. Ag production drives upper watershed improvements [for increased water supply]; upper watershed/ federal forest lands are not in good shape.

Bike Rack (thoughts reserved for discussion at another time):

- Improving relationships with Federal and State agencies, including the US Forest Service
- Education/outreach for broader inclusion

Reflections on what is needed now:

- What is the mission for this new collaboration? [We're not there yet. The TBWP existing mission and vision needs discussion by the collaborative for potential adoption or modification.]
- What are the gaps that need to be filled? (don't duplicate efforts; need a Gap Analysis of some kind)
- What do we *want*, and feel compelled, to do?
- Form follows function (in terms of the governance structure being determined as Mission, Vision, Goals, etc. are established.)
- Information-sharing on what's happening
- How can we help each other? **Share information and find overlapping interests**
- Need for outreach/education
- **Cultivate love of place/sense of place; build relationships to deepen connections to Tulare [Basin]**
- What brought us here in the first place? Catalyst?
- What is the role of policy?
- Need to do what it takes to create a sustainable Valley and Tulare Watershed overall
- Clarify what connects *all* of us, what is the commonality, and what is missing
 - **Focus on water, land, people**
 - Urgency relating the climate change and need to "get out of silos"
- **Need a network, committed engagement;** a "meta – or umbrella" – organization of organizations is what's needed; reinforce and amplify others' work (not recreate it)
- Have to start a vision and commit to staying engaged and clarifying how we collaborate
- Reinforce empathy
- **Need to start with a core group and, when ready, all others in the watershed**
- Seek to understand TNC's work - French Meadows example - and learn from them
- Engage GSAs and make the case for connections to the upper watershed; believe there is openness to that now that they are working on GSP's
- general consensus that progress was made at this meeting

[Robert's assessment post-meeting: "The moment feels potent and full of potential in terms of turning the ideas generated into a charter, or the initial elements of one, and tracking down and mapping stakeholders and projects/initiatives already happening."]