

MEETING SUMMARY

Tulare Basin Watershed Connections – Working Group Meeting August 26th, 2014

Participants

Michelle Selmon- California Department of Water Resources (DWR) (interim working group lead)
Sarah Campe- Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC)
Dave Clendenen – Vollmar Natural Lands Consulting (VNLC)
Carol Combs- Tulare Basin Wildlife Partners (TBWP)
Dave Hoffman- Deer-Creek Tule River Association (DC TRA)
Denise Kadara- Tulare Basin Wildlife Partners (TBWP)
Kayode Kadara- Community of Allensworth
Adam Livingston- Sequoia Riverlands Trust (SRT) (on the phone)
Nino Mascolo- Southern California Edison (SCE) (on the phone)
Jennifer Morales- California Department of Water Resources (DWR)
Koren Nydick- Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park (S/KCNP)(on the phone)
Eric Osterling- Kings Basin Water Authority (KBWA) (on the phone)

Introductions

Participants introduced themselves and briefly identified what they hoped to get out of participating on this working group and what they could bring to the effort.

Sarah - now with the SNC and wearing a new hat; concerned with healthy forests; water bond may bring opportunities for funding

Dave C. – has extensive experience with land conservation, riparian habitat; concerned about groundwater overdraft; current system isn't sustainable; need better watershed coordination

Kayode – works with disadvantaged communities, represents their perspectives

Denise – planning background; member on Tulare Lake Basin SOAC Water Study for disadvantaged communities and serves on committees for water grants from Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Strategic Growth Council (SGC) for Allensworth and Alpaugh

Carole – Sees TBWP as a catalyst for this effort; much to be done

Adam – serves as Director for Planning and Policy for SRT and Coordinator for Southern Sierra Partnership (SSP); concerned with issues identified in the SSP Framework (e.g. maintaining biodiversity, aquifer recharge, etc.) and we need water for all of them

Koren – organizer for Southern Sierra Partnership where they emphasized “climate-smart conservation” which is relevant to this effort; she’s interested in linkages between forest health, watershed health, and the human connections; also climate change and intersection with fire and fuels management

Eric – works with KBWA on many aspects of water management; involved with flood control, water rights, water quality, and other relevant issues; assisted with DWR CC Handbook development; wants to learn more about the upper watershed

Nico – has experience with natural and cultural resources and hydrology in Sequoia and Kings Canyon areas; works with many federal, state, and other land management partners; Edison activities touch on many of the issues we’ll discuss in this group, so he wants to listen and participate where he can

Carole noted that the Tulare Basin Watershed Initiative website has information about funding sources, and distributes a bi-weekly e-newsletter with grant and resource information in it. Carole offered to facilitate information dissemination from this group via that newsletter.

Goal Statement Discussion

- Review of one-page document with: previous suggestions for goal statement; brief list of major issues identified during the Watershed Connections workshops; and definition of Integrated Resources Management (IRM)

Major Points Discussed While Forming the Goal Statement

- ✚ The goals statement needs to be relevant to real concerns of the day, i.e. dry wells, loss of income, etc.
- ✚ Need to add 'sustainable water use', sustainability inherently includes resiliency.
- ✚ 'economic and ecological resilience' should be added. We may also add 'social and environmental or ecological need'. Group determined 'ecological' is better to use than 'environmental' to avoid controversy.
- ✚ The goals statement needs to indicate we are balancing interests, and pursuing mutually beneficial projects (e.g. clean water supply, healthy forests)
- ✚ 'Tulare Basin' needs to be noted in the statement, but efforts are not limited to our region.
- ✚ We need to indicate how we interact with other efforts.
- ✚ Some participants felt we need to stick to planning and not delve into policy change; others asked how our planning will turn into actions without policy? It was suggested that we can influence policy change if needed but can do quite a bit within current policy framework. The group agreed to that approach for now.
- ✚ Information gathering is a good place to start before policy change, how can we incorporate this into our action statement?
- ✚ Having these entities working together will help us leverage funds into the district.
- ✚ We can set an example for other basins how to work together.
- ✚ At the state level, natural resource conservation agencies are trying to align efforts and identify barriers to break down; we can inform that effort.
- ✚ This group will be an evolution of the existing Tulare Basin Wildlife Network, to the 'next level'
- ✚ We need to compare strategies from our organizations, and we need to compile some basic information before we'll get any support.
- ✚ We need to work collaboratively to attract funds to the area.
- ✚ The Semitropic Water Banking project is an example of both a short term and long term solution to water supply issues. They are concerned with groundwater overdraft so they are buying retired land to restore and are selling conservation easements and then using that money to buy more land. Buying the ag land prevents pumping; 10,000 acres in 10 years is the goal; cost of recent acquisition was \$2-3 million for 400 acres. The value of land is going up, which makes it difficult.

Goal Statement: *To advance collaborative watershed planning and resource management in the Tulare Basin based on sound science and mutually identified needs for regional economic and ecological sustainability.*

Potential objectives that were informally identified during the meeting, and had support of multiple parties:

- ✚ Create a compilation of innovative ideas and successful partnerships to stimulate expanded collaboration, avoid duplication of efforts, and replicate successes
- ✚ Facilitate integration of currently separate projects that offer mutual benefits (e.g. identifying areas suitable for a flow-through system that could support both wildlife and groundwater recharge).
- ✚ Compare our existing plans (for working group participants and other key entities concerned with IRM in the Tulare Basin) to see where plans and strategies match up in order to find projects that can be supported by the whole group
- ✚ Create a matrix/mental map to help see where this partnership can fit in and interact with other partnerships
- ✚ Support/coordinate themed workshops on topics of relevance (e.g. drought, groundwater) to bring people into the same room to facilitate discussions among diverse partners and expand collaboration
- ✚ Increase awareness of upper watershed issues for lower watershed interests and vice-versa

Other comments

- We need to bring additional key stakeholders to the table soon, yet be careful about getting too broad in scope
- We should start small, and be strategic
- We need to have both short and long-term goals; should accomplish something within a year
- We should work with NGOs and other lesser known groups to at least find out who they are and what their geographic scope is, what their goals are, etc.
- Themed workshop

Additional 'key players' who the group felt should be at the table were:

- ❖ Allen Ishida – Tulare County Supervisor, Tulare County Water Commission, Sierra Nevada Conservancy board member
- ❖ Dick Moss – Provost and Pritchard Consulting Group
- ❖ Matt Hurley – General Manager, Angiola Water District
- ❖ Community Water Center representative– Laurel Fireston, Susana DeAnda, or Maria Herrera
- ❖ Chris Kapheim – General Manager, Alta Irrigation District
- ❖ Mark Larsen – General Manager, Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District
- ❖ David Orth – General Manager, Kings River Conservation District
- ❖ Paul Oshel - District Engineer, Semitropic Water Storage District
- ❖ Martha Conklin – Interim Academic Director, UC Merced Sierra Nevada Research Institute
- ❖ Roger Bales – Director, UC Merced, Sierra Nevada Research Institute

Next Steps:

- The group agreed on bi-monthly meetings
- Agenda topic suggestion for the next meeting – discussion of projects that are relevant to this process
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Assignments:

- Michelle to send out meeting notes and a poll for the next meeting
- Michelle will request information from meeting participants about their employers' respective goals/plans that apply to this effort to begin to address potential objectives identified above and will compile for the next meeting.
- Participants should fulfill the information request above at least two weeks prior to the next meeting
- Participants should provide contact information for the 'additional key players' identified in the meeting to Michelle (if you suggested that person, it's your job!) by September 22