

**TAdN Steering Committee Meeting
June 2, 2006**

**Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Resource Center
Davis, California**

Minutes

Those attending included: Mark Newhouser, Deanne DiPietro, Kasey Allen, Bob Hass, SEC; David Spencer, USDA/ARS, UC Davis; Frank Wallace, Sacramento Weed Warriors, CNPS; Michael Perrone, Ca. Dept. of Water Resources; Ron Unger, EDAW; Vance Howard, EDAW; Lynell Pollack, Ron Watson, Cache Creek Conservancy; Susan Mason, CSU, Chico; Dave Dyer, USDA-NRCS; Rob Hill, Butte County Agricultural Commissioner's Office; Katie Pilat, San Francisquito Creek Watershed Council.

PROGRAM UPDATES AND DISCUSSION

Administrative progress has been made in getting contracts signed and eradication plans from partners. Partners still need to file quarterly reports regardless of what has been accomplished each quarter, because the program still has to report to CBDA what has occurred.

The program will send partners a checklist for quarterly reporting to simplify remembering what is required, and a list of dates when reports are due (the 5th of the month following when quarter ends).

The initial site assessment can be done without using WIMS, for partners who are not yet up-to-speed. All needed information is located on the TAdN website. Currently partners are operating under their own permits, so whether revegetation is needed or not depends on the requirements of those permits. If the program succeeds in getting a program-wide or regional permit, that situation may change. Partners present indicated they do not have any plans for revegetation at the present time.

A revised TAdN Monitoring and Evaluation proposal to CBDA is currently being finalized. If funded, this will help refine methods of making and recording weed observations.

DATA COORDINATION AND MAPPING TASKS

WIMS-3 Beta Training Opportunities

This version of the WIMS software was released about 6 weeks ago, and is available for downloading from the TAdN website, along with a 90-page user manual. The first official WIMS training was given a week ago to Upper Cache Creek, an AECP partner, at their work site. The 6–7-hour training is available to all partners. If interested, contact Kasey Allen at 707-996-0712, ext. 112. The training focuses primarily on understanding the terminology and data structure used with WIMS. Kasey can also do a trial run with

the partner using WIMS if needed. In addition, a team from AECP can also go out in the field with partners one time if really need additional help using WIMS, or can provide additional support by phone. The team is committed to making sure partners are successful in using it.

WIMS3 Beta Privacy Issues

WIMS3 has the ability to collect landowner information. A concern was raised that when data is requested from partners, partners want assurance that their landowner information will not be shared with CBDA or AECP. To address this issue, AECP will develop an export function that allows partners to exclude landowner information. In addition, while AECP is posting data on the Web, this does *not* include landowner or parcel information.

Another issue raised was the naming convention used for parcels. It is best for partners not to use the landowner name in weed locations and area names. Instead, you can use initials or numbers that jog your memory but can't be traced back to a landowner. Using an acronym for the water body and plant name works well. You can also use a river mile numbering convention, but it is recommended that you first research whether one already exists.

Equipment

Contact Kasey if you want suggestions on which GPS receiver models to buy, because the AECP data team can more easily provide support on a few specific models. In general, the more expensive models are better ones.

Protocol

AECP staff are refining the WIMS data collection weed protocol, but would like feedback from partners. For instance, how do you delineate an observation area? The protocol has to be flexible for each site. Also, how often and what time of year should monitoring be done?

While WIMS is not a research-based protocol, we still want one that is effective. The end goal in collecting data on eradication work is to be able to detect changes in the vegetation (in species composition or structure) in any particular area that can be compared year-to-year, and that can be attributed to your *Arundo* eradication efforts. So you want to observe each vegetation community at about the same time each year so your observations are consistent, and so within each area they can be compared over time based on repeated observations.

The timing of eradication work will often dictate the timing of observations. The period between July and October seems to be the best time to conduct eradication and monitoring. From a practical standpoint it is recommended that you assign one particular crew member to taking observations (someone who is not doing eradication).

Q: Is there any relationship between AECP and weed management areas?

WMAs went unfunded for several years, which was very damaging to them. Recently the state legislature passed new funding for them, with significant help from Cal-IPC and NRCS. It appears there is more potential for future collaboration, however, as in the area of training, and eventually in collecting and sharing data within the invasive species management community. For example, at the recent WIMS training (mentioned above), the Lake County Agricultural Commissioner attended the session. It seems like a good idea for partners to invite their local agricultural commissioner if they are arranging a WIMS training.

EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN (USDA ARS – DAVID SPENCER)

The research component of Phase 2 of AECP intends to address three large issues by answering lots of small questions. The three main issues are listed below.

ISSUE #1. How effective are herbicides on Arundo at the specific sites where they are being used, and what is the optimal time to use them?

We will conduct experiments using different herbicides and rates applied during various months in the growing season to learn more about how these factors affect efficacy.

ISSUE #2: How do the treated sites respond once Arundo is removed?

We will be collecting transect data from sites where Arundo has been removed and comparing it to similar sites with Arundo present. We are interested in learning whether or not natural revegetation is sufficient, or whether it is necessary to actively plant desirable species.

Both of these experiments require lengthy time periods. We have contacted partners and are asking if they have sites where we can conduct these experiments. We already have dates set up to visit some partner sites for this purpose.

ISSUE #3: What is the response of the entire watershed to Arundo removal?

How will Arundo removal from a stream course affect the movement of water within the channel? We will use data on Arundo distribution in conjunction with the HEC-RAS model to obtain answers to this question.

PROGRAMMATIC PERMITTING (EDAW – RON UNGER, VANCE HOWARD)

Actions Taken by EDAW Between March and June 2006:

- Refined the program description based on TAdN partners' feedback and comments, and added final project area boundaries for each watershed partner to the program description.
- Met with Carolyn Remick of Sustainable Conservation to collaborate on strategic approaches to programmatic permitting. Determined the feasibility of a programmatic approach to permitting for the entire program, and discussed agency personnel who would be receptive to discussion about this program. Talked about the need for local government permits (grading permits, encroachment permits, etc.).
- Participated in an interagency meeting with state and federal agencies who are part of the California Biodiversity Council (CBC). One item of interest to the CBC has become nonnative invasive plants and their effects on biodiversity in northern California watersheds. The CBC is interested in invasive plant removal activities and has expressed concerns with regulatory permitting. Therefore, the CBC agency community held a meeting on streamlined permitting approaches on March 8, 2006. EDAW attended the meeting and discussed the goals and objectives of the TAdN program as well as the vision for the permitting strategy. Based on the presentation of the program and its goals, CBC considered assisting TAdN by participating in regulatory agency discussions and possible solutions/strategies for streamlined permitting for invasive plant abatement and restoration projects.
- Continued discussions with CBC agency personnel. The agency folks discussed TAdN at the larger CBC group meeting and CBC has chosen the TAdN program as a "pilot project" which CBC will participate in, to pursue streamlining or establishment of programmatic procedures for permitting invasive plant abatement and restoration projects.
- Participated in meeting with the Central Valley Bay-Delta Branch of the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) on April 26, 2006. The meeting was held to determine if DFG could and was willing to be the CEQA lead agency for the program. The TAdN program would require some level of CEQA review. It is assumed that it would qualify for a categorical exemption-level CEQA document. DFG stated that they would be willing to be the CEQA lead agency, and that if the program could gain concurrence from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service that there would be no adverse effects to special status species, then DFG could issue a Categorical Exemption for the program. Otherwise it would need to be examined at a higher level of CEQA (Initial Study, Negative Declaration, Mitigated Negative Declaration, Environmental Impact Report). In terms of permitting, DFG stated that a programmatic-level permit could be issued to TAdN at the program level, with a requirement of amendments or addendums to the programmatic permit for each specific watershed partner project area. This would be required to cover the specific differences of each watershed project area.

- EDAW is pursuing agency meetings with the help of CBC, and also set up an interagency meeting under the “pre-application meeting” system at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. This meeting will be held June 14 at the San Francisco District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Office. It will be an opportunity for TAdN and EDAW to discuss the program and proposed permitting strategy with agency personnel. It is anticipated that personnel from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Game, NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service, and U.S. EPA will attend. The goal of the meeting is to obtain positive feedback from the agencies on approaches to programmatic or streamlined permitting for this program and this type of activity. Clear objectives are anticipated to be created for moving forward with the permitting of the program, with a clear understanding of the timeline for obtaining permits.

EDAW is trying to reduce the hurdle that regulatory issues pose for invasives control. It looks like we will receive a categorical exemption for the entire program area if we can convince all agencies that the eradication work won't impact any sensitive species. Otherwise we will have to proceed with a higher level of CEQA regulations.

Ron Unger then went through a “Key Questions” sheet with partners to solicit corrections to each partner's Project Description.

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

The next TAdN meeting will be held on Thursday, September 14, 10 a.m. to 12 noon at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area offices.