

**TAdN Steering Committee Meeting  
December 1, 2006**

**USDA Building, Davis, CA**

Those present included: Susan Mason, CSU Chico Research Fdn.; Michael Perrone, CDWR; Ron Unger, EDAW; Mark Snyder and Rich Marovich, Lower Putah Crk. Coord. Council; Chris Sauer, Napa Cty Flood Control Dist.; Carolyn Ruttan, Pete Juntunen, DPW-Lake Cty; Ryan Navratil, San Francisquito Watershed Council; Dave Dyer, USDA-NRCS; Dave Spencer, USDA-ARS; Sharon Weaver, San Joaquin River Pkwy & Conserv. Trust; Mark Newhouser, Bob Hass, Jessie Olson, Kasey Allen, Deanne DiPietro, Bryan Sesser, Zhahai Stewart, SEC (20 attendees).

**PROGRAM UPDATES AND DISCUSSION**

**Amendment Request**

We were waiting two years for approval of our monitoring and evaluation proposal. We still don't know status of it, but are hoping to hear soon.

**Eradication Support Services Budget**

Funding had originally been intended to support the purchase of some large equipment under Phase 2 of the program. So we got approval to use it to support additional needs of program and partners, at our discretion. Program has had to increase trainings on data gathering and processing, so a portion of the money is being spent in this area.

Partners: If at any point in time you feel you have inadequate funding, or have exhausted the amount you originally budgeted for your data management and it becomes a burden, let Mark know. There's \$50,000 available for supplemental requests. As an example, Rob Hill of the Butte County Agricultural Commission indicated in a quarterly report that he had not budgeted for his data management. In his case, he needed a new computer to handle the data, so we were able to help him there.

**DATA COORDINATION AND MAPPING TASKS**

Zhahai Stewart is replacing Kasey Allen for WIMS 3 Beta support. Please get to know him and know that he and other SEC GIS staff are a resource for you in data management.

**WIMS 3 Beta Training Update**

Training began in May and has been ongoing since then. All but one partner has been trained, and some retraining has also occurred. We will help with whatever it takes to get you comfortable using the WIMS 3 Beta program. If you call at any time, you can get help.

### **Partner Data Collection/Submittal**

We have received data from 5 partners so far for the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter. Partners need to create Weed Occurrences and Weed Assessments for every Arundo patch, as well as Area Surveys for each Area, for baseline data. If this doesn't occur, it will prevent us from doing what the funder expects. We'll keep at it until every partner has mapped all the Arundo to be treated under this program. Then we'll analyze the data. Partners also need to create Area Surveys in the field because we are behind schedule. By the next TAdN Steering Committee meeting, we'd like to see all partners providing complete quarterly data.

One of the AECP hypotheses, "Native riparian vegetation increases after Arundo removal," can be analyzed by data from Area Surveys. WIMS3 Beta—we changed the software in order to collect needed data to answer our program's hypotheses. This is science—trying to show before and after conditions (baseline vs. after treatments). WIMS 3 Beta is also a standard across many organizations, and makes data sharing much easier.

We're asking partners to collect data that will provide insight into hypotheses 1, 2, and 4. We are looking for patterns. Will discuss what we think went on in our final report by augmenting our qualitative data (?)

The TAdN protocol uses percent cover to measure vegetation. It does not use clear-point transects—the protocol is not as rigorous as that. For each weed clump, you're just observing it and drawing a polygon around it. The protocol includes photomonitoring. Eventually the goal is for this protocol to be peer-reviewed and published. However, the goal was for it not to be overly burdensome for vegetation managers, but one that is practical, and that will also provide valuable data.

If later on the program requests from partners information on cost-analysis or labor hours per acre, it could increase the value of the protocol results, particularly for land managers. This type of information is not widely available and is not often collected.

Most often, everyone is out there doing their "own thing" with invasive weed eradication. This program (AECP) is one of the first times multiple organizations are doing things in a standardized way and providing data into a central database.

Handout shows 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter data. Partners were asked to estimate the percentage of baseline data completed (initial surveys, including area surveys) and give this figure to Kasey by the end of the meeting. Include a note to him if you feel unsure about how you are doing with your data collection or if you have any concerns related to it.

### **Map Server Update**

Map server pages are constructed. In order to fulfill our commitments to the funder, we will publish map server pages in the next week or so, even when a partner has not submitted Phase 2 data.

Task 5 mapping: Our objective is to compile Arundo distribution data from all available sources. For Bay and Delta regions, canvassing is complete. There will also be an effort to “fill in the gaps” by analyzing air photos. We plan to evaluate current distribution with a habitat rating layer (high-value habitat) and derive a priority ranking for future eradication funding.

Regarding what Arundo infestations will be considered a priority: The general rule of thumb is that if there is any risk of Arundo spreading into a waterway, then you would want to prioritize that patch, regardless of where it is located (in wild area or in someone’s backyard).

### **Partner Progress Reports**

Susan Mason/Sandy Gulch/Lindo Channel: Didn’t get permits until 1<sup>st</sup> week in October (permit ran out Oct. 15). Project had time to treat about half of Arundo infestations. Talked to NMFS to extend permit, but the agency required a consultation. Kristin Cooper Carter is preparing a video for homeowners of how to keep Arundo under control. It is expected to be available by the end of the year.

Chris Sauer/Napa River: Getting up to speed since just took over responsibilities from Todd Adams. Sprayed Arundo patches (above and down river from Calistoga).

Carolyn Ruttan/Upper Cache Creek: Pete Juntunen is our GIS whiz. Finished treatment for this year. Are having incredibly good success with “bend and spray” method—bending Arundo down in swaths, and then spraying everything. Previously had been using cut, resprout, and spray method? which was extremely laborious.

Sharon Weaver/San Joaquin River: Finally up and running with WIMS/ArcPad. Expect to have all area surveys and occurrences submitted by the end of December. Working with David Spencer on experiments at Sycamore Island Ranch on the San Joaquin River. Permitting is complete except for FWS consultation.

Jessie Olson/Sonoma Creek: Treated about half of infestations in Phase 1, and now are working downstream. Have treated once 90% of all known occurrences we have access to. Have assessed and mapped occurrences. Fixing data entry so # of assessments matches # of occurrences. Lost access to one of big landowners with lots of Arundo on his site (adjacent to Sonoma Creek). Hope to reestablish that partnership next season.

Ryan Navratil/San Francisquito Creek: The project is in pretty good shape. Have all of our baseline maps. Have treated 4 of 7 sites; don’t have access to the other 3 right now. We are using whatever time we have left in our budget to expand our baseline (i.e., to move into other tributaries in the watershed). Our project probably has less Arundo to treat than most other partners.

Rich Marovich/Putah Creek: We have been working with Kasey to enter data from previous shape files directly into the WIMS 3 Beta database—but it ended up we could not import the information directly, so we had to reenter the data. Baseline data is now

nearly complete from our original assessments. Have been spraying Arundo this year and assessing results from last year. So far most of what we treated last year is dead. Where we find any remaining green vegetation, we are treating it a second time.

Frank Wallace/American River: Have identified about 85 Arundo clusters. Challenge in our region is that they are so spread out, and cover 9 different watersheds from Auburn to Sacramento. This area includes 3 different counties, 4 different city jurisdictions, a state park, and a national wildlife preserve! The dynamics of developing jurisdictional interactions and encroachment permits has taken up a lot of our time. Our organization is primarily volunteer-based and we have been attempting to increase our capacity here. Most of our Arundo clusters are isolated. We also have endangered species concerns, so need to wait for F&W permits. Are collaborating with David Spencer in experimental research.

### **Experimental Design Update**

David Spencer has been working with partners, conducting 4 experiments in 4 watersheds. These include:

- San Joaquin River: comparing different rates of glyphosate usage, and timing of treatments)
- Sonoma Creek: Comparing different rates of glyphosate usage along several sites.
- Gray Lodge: comparing treated and untreated plants using imazipyr
- San Francisquito Creek: Plan to conduct reveg study on \_\_\_\_\_ by end of Dec.

Has also been working with Upper Cache Creek. Hope to conduct experiments in Sandy Gulch. May also work with American River, if can get required permits in time.

Taking transects on one side of clump, running it through clump to edge of creek. We identify every plant that occurs. Will have very detailed species lists, frequency of occurrence, etc.

We visited other watersheds but won't have experiments there, although folks have been very helpful. Glad we'll have extra year to continue experiments, since this will make findings more meaningful.

There was a brief discussion about how to prevent loss of data in the field. Always download data every day from handheld into desktop WIMS 3 Beta database. Be aware of high voltage power lines, which can cause data loss. Kasey will provide partners with instructions on safest way to store data.

### **Programmatic Permitting Update**

EDAW (Ron Unger, Eric Htain) tried to secure permits and environmental compliance for a large geographic area (i.e., all watershed partners together) and covering a broader array of project activities to control Arundo, associated invasive plants, and follow-up restoration actions. The hope was to acquire permits for partners for a broad array of actions so that individual partners would not have to go back to agencies for approval of each action or new project locations. EDAW and SEC attended the US Army Corps of

Engineers (USACE) pre-application meeting in June 2006 using the project description developed with partners beginning in fall 2005. The USACE indicated that if we modified a few things in our project description, no Section 404 permit would be required from them as the project would not fall within their jurisdiction. In consultation with the partners, EDAW rewrote the project description to further avoid issues and areas under jurisdiction by the USACE or Regional Water Boards such that neither a Section 401 nor 404 permit would be required, adding to the special status species and resource avoidance measures already in the project description.

Most permits and environmental compliance have now been acquired or satisfied. Still pending approval for all but the Lindo Channel partner is a letter of “not likely to adversely affect” special status species, or equivalent, from the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Lindo Channel secured this approval from the USFWS by October because they had all the data the USFWS needed and they needed to work in Lindo Channel before the seasonal restrictions of the permit would take place in late October. The remaining partners are still awaiting USFWS review and approval of the project, anticipated by February 2007. If partners are outside of areas with habitat for listed species that FWS oversees, partners can begin their project work, so long as they have permits or approvals from the other agencies. For instance, work may be conducted at least 100 feet away from valley elderberry longhorn beetle habitat (blue elderberry shrubs) where no other special status species populations may occur. As a result, though most partners are still awaiting USFWS approvals, most watersheds can do work in some areas. Ron needs to hear what difficulties partners are still facing related to permitting and environmental compliance. (Rich Marovich indicated that, while the timeline for acquiring regulatory and environmental compliance is long, based on his experience with streamlined permitting for the Putah Creek watershed, conducted in 2002, once watershed-scale permits and compliance letters are secured, work can proceed quicker and future reapproval is much easier.

Ron thanked Rich Marovich for addressing pesticide issues from the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) on behalf of this project. His letter to the resource agencies enabled informal consultation with the NMFS and USFWS under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Without this assistance, consultation under Section 10 would have been necessary which would likely have taken a few years for review and approval and could have required preparation of a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP).

The regulatory agencies have expressed interest in streamlining the regulatory approval process for invasive plant and restoration work, as expressed at a recent California Biodiversity Council (CBC) meeting held in March 2006. CBC expressed interest in helping to coordinate agency staff to discuss streamlined permitting for this project, using it as a pilot project. However, due to a heavy workload, the CBC has thus far been unable to provide such help.

A recommendation was made to consider going back to the CBC once the regulatory and environmental compliance tasks are completed, to explain what was achieved and

challenges encountered in the process. Ron asked partners to please consider thanking Eric Htain for all the work he has done on their behalf.

Next Meeting Date: Friday, March 2, 10-12, Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area.