

TAdN Steering Committee Meeting
March 2, 2007
Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, Davis, CA

Those present included: Eric Htain, EDAW; Rich Marovich and Mark Snyder, Putah Creek; Susan Mason, Lindo Channel (Sandy Gulch); Mark Newhouser, Zhahai Stewart, Deanne DiPietro, Bob Hass, Sonoma Ecology Center; Jessie Olson, Sonoma Creek (SEC); Frank Wallace, American River; Dave Spencer, USDA/ARS; Todd Adams, Napa River; and Carolyn Ruttan, Upper Cache Creek.

PROGRAM UPDATES AND DISCUSSION

Amendment Request

The program is developing yet another amendment request (Amendment 4)—for additional funds for programmatic permitting to cover costs of tasks that exceed scope of initial proposal. Amendment 3 was for a one-year extension to the program.

Eradication Support Services Budget Requests

There is a small amount of funding available to partners who may need some additional funds to help with data collection and monitoring. About \$4,400 is available per partner.

CBDAMonitoring/Evaluation Proposal

The program submitted a proposal for \$400,000 to develop and refine monitoring protocols and have it peer-reviewed. Funder responded by offering funding for one-quarter of initial budget. Still haven't received an award letter, although have been told proposal is being funded. Being able to upgrade the monitoring protocol—based on partner feedback—will provide a tangible benefit not only to program partners, but to others in the weed management community.

A question was raised regarding the 10% retention of funds (held back until each project is completed). We have brought this issue up with state legislators, as it places a financial hardship on nonprofit partners. The reason legislators imposed this requirement in the first place was based on a concern that without it, some funded partners might not complete their projects.

Issue of late payments to partners: This was due to transition from CBDA to DFG. Mark just sent email to all partners explaining cause for the delay.

DATA COORDINATION AND MAPPING TASKS

Geoweed Training Update

Have changed the name of the monitoring and database program to Geoweed, because it has diverged from The Nature Conservancy's WIMS2 program. This should avoid confusion between the two programs. Geoweed is in the middle of being improved, and program staff will be communicating with partners about this, and arranging for

additional field training in next few months. We'll be inviting people to bring GPS units and laptops, and together we will survey some sites.

Geoweed program is also being used by National Park Service, so there is also the possibility of conducting a joint training with AECOP partners and them earlier than the next TAdN meeting. There will also be a training following the next TAdN meeting (from 1-3 pm) for partners who can't attend an earlier training. The purpose of the training is to demonstrate the new functionality of Geoweed and review the software for those who need a refresher by using it in the field.

We're trying to make user interface easier, and clarify the semantics of certain terms such as *treatment area*. New screen will have option to specify polygon or treatment area. One partner reminded all of value to use both. Also, may want to track a polygon from original assessment to final assessment. So far we've tried to get polygons as close as possible to the boundaries of each patch.

We're also establishing a website for discussion of issues related to Geoweed and we will announce it when it's ready. We're also hoping that partners more experienced in the use of Geoweed will help mentor less experienced ones, and may attempt to connect the two groups.

Partner Data Collection and Submittal

Zhahai would like to find out which missing pieces of data partners currently have on paper (based on sheet he passed out, "Data for all TAdN Partners"). There has been a problem with what an "area" means compared to what a "region" means, so we're trying to clarify that in the software. We are rethinking how many area surveys are needed. Each partner's situation will be different. We need to make sure protocols we use monitor change over time. Zhahai and Deanne will work with each partner to make sure we have good area survey data.

Geoweed is getting more geographic. One of pieces being enhanced—the project centerpoint—is not stored in database. We're going to start storing that (latitude/longitude).

Map Server Update

Ongoing work. By summer 2007 hope to have update completed.

Mapping Task Update

Ongoing. Sharing data with state.

PROGRAMMATIC PERMITTING

Regulatory Project Update, Amendment Request

Partner Permitting Progress

Have received almost all permits partners need, except FWS permit which is holding up permitting process for most partners. San Francisquito and Sonoma are still waiting to receive amended Streambed Alteration Agreements.

Mark Newhouser, Ron Unger, and Eric Htain met with FWS on March 8. FWS said data is good, but need better clarification of the program's impact as a whole on federally listed species. Additionally, there are current legal issues stemming from a lawsuit with the EPA regarding pesticide use in red-legged frog habitat that is affecting permitting with USFWS and CDFG. Until EPA, CDFG and USFWS resolve this legal issue, USFWS cannot issue permits to projects that will have "take" of red-legged frogs. Ironically, removal of Arundo is likely to have a beneficial impact on red-legged frog habitat.

The TAdN partners' projects could be delayed because of the time it is expected to take to obtain permits from USFWS. In order for USFWS to issue incidental take permits, they will require TAdN to provide them with a biological assessment describing the program's effects on federally listed species. Because the biological assessment is out of the scope of work agreed to between EDAW and SEC/TAdN, this work must be covered under the amendment and funds must be secured from the amendment before the biological assessment can be prepared. The time delay in preparing the biological assessment for USFWS and their review of the biological assessment in support of issuance of the permits could extend into the latter portion of this season. Since partner's projects cannot begin until they receive the permits, this will delay their ability to work until later in the season. Some strategies for moving forward:

- 1) Phase 1 partners can continue to operate under existing permits by working in areas covered under Phase 1 contract *this* year, and then work in areas covered under Phase 2 *next* year. American River and San Joaquin River partners would need location data for elderberry plants so can get letter of technical assistance—at least those within a certain distance of Arundo clumps.
- 2) Possibility of getting authorization for partners to begin work before receiving programmatic permit, providing they agree to follow USFWS protocols for avoidance and minimization. EDAW will work with SEC to speak with USFWS on this matter and determine if USFWS will be comfortable issuing authorizations for the partners to start work before issuance of the programmatic permit. The maximum time expected before the authorizations will be issued is anticipated to be 60 days from the date of submittal of the request (for this strategy). We will map this as we go and give you information about elderberry as we find it. FWS has allowed eradication work within 100' of drip line of elderberry bushes.

EDAW cannot move forward with any of this additional permitting work until it receives additional funds (in advance or through award of the amendment). EDAW needs to receive letter of authorization from SEC to proceed with work. If this work is in advance of award of the amendment, the letter of authorization must also state that work can begin up to a fixed dollar amount (EDAW to provide). Suggestion that SEC write letter to FWS explaining how and why funds have been exhausted for permitting, and that program is now in jeopardy due to delays. Experimental component is included in proposed EDAW permitting work.

EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN UPDATE

We have set up herbicide related experiments, but would like to set up additional experiments in partner watersheds. We are especially seeking a site where *Arundo* occurs at variable distances from the watercourse. At a site near Stony Creek, we collected measurements to be used for the HEC-RAS modeling component. We have established four revegetation experiments. Three are in the Sonoma Creek watershed, and one is in the San Francisquito watershed. We will continue to monitor them. These experiments test the hypothesis that active revegetation is required in areas where eradication has taken place. We still have to collect more information from these sites, but all the experiments described in the original proposal, except one, are now underway.

We sampled relative abundance of species at four sites along Putah Creek, selected by Rich Marovich. These data will be used to track changes in species composition over time. We compared the abundance of *Arundo* at the four sites. At sites where *Arundo* has been treated one or more times, *Arundo* frequency was about one-half of that at a site which had not been treated. These data imply that eradication techniques and efforts are succeeding.

There was no time for partner eradication updates.

Next Meeting: Friday, June 1, 2007, Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, 10-12; Lunch provided. Field Training, 1-3.