



California Fish Passage Forum Steering Committee Meeting

Nov 7th, 2023, Meeting Minutes

Present:

Forum Members (in-person): Holly Steindorf (Natural Resource Consultants), Sandi Jacobson, (CalTrout) Bob Pagliuco (NOAA), Anna Halligan (Trout unlimited), Natalie Stauffer-Olsen (Trout Unlimited), Anne Elston (PSMFC), Neal Scheraga (PSMFC), Andrew Hampton (CDFW), Gena Lasko (State Parks), Theo Claire (CDWR)

Forum Members (virtual): Tim Loux (USFWS), Holly Eddinger (US FS), Emily Siegel (CA State Parks)

Forum Members Absent: Darren Mierau (CalTrout), Ruth Goodfield (NOAA), Stan Allen (PSMFC), Van Hare (PSMFC), Dan Gale (USFWS), Mark Gard (CDFW), Jim Long (CDWR), Marisa Parish (CA State Parks), Joshua Black (CDWR), Sam Janniches (SSC).

Guests (in person): Jason Azat (CDFW), Dave White (NOAA), Steve Edmondson (NOAA), Matt Erickson (CDFW), Sarah Nossaman Pierce, (NOAA), Christina Freeman (CA State Parks), Adrienne Chenette (Coastal Science & Policy Program at UCSC), Pat Samuel (CalTrout), Derek Acomb (CDFW), Garrett Altmann (FEMA EPIC), Kristine Pepper (CDFW), William McKinnon (Water Audit California), Joe Pecharich (NOAA), Alexandria Malilay (NOAA), Erik Schmidt (WRA Consultants), Chris Feng (WRA Consultants), Rich Marovich (Water Audit California).

Guests (virtual): Jenn Repp (NRC-Virtual Support), Jason Olive (USFWS, NFHP), Daniel Burmester (CDFW), Kasey Sirkin (USACE), Richard VanSant (CA State Parks), Analise Rivero (CalTrout), Deon Bryant, (NOAA) , Kimberly Clements (NOAA), Mindy Simmons (USACE), Robin Graber (USBOR), Irene Hoiby (USBOR)

Minutes 11/7/2023

*Find Accompanying Presentations on <https://www.cafishpassageforum.org/events-meetings/>

Welcome & Introductions

Holly Steindorf (Forum Coordinator) convened the meeting around 8:45am. Thanked all for attending and reminded attendees that this was a hybrid meeting. Sandi Jacobson (CalTrout, Forum Chair) welcomed all attendees. Sandi states that the Forum is collaboratively based, having many guests attending is beneficial to increase awareness of the Forum, and maximize our role to improve interagency communication to expedite solving fish passage issues.

Virtual Attendees introduced themselves first, the in-person attendees. Initial attendance was mostly forum membership with some NOAA and CDFW guests, more guests to join later for project presentations and the afternoon BIL funding discussion.

Forum Signatory Updates*

Present forum signatories provided brief updates on the tasks and projects from their organization. Virtual Attendees went first. See main meeting Presentation for Signatory Updates.

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*US Forest Service- Holly Eddinger

- National Keystone Agreement with Trout Unlimited, ~ \$7 million with BIL funds signed in 2022, ~ \$33 million with IRA funds just signed in July 2023.
- The AOP Dashboard and Map Viewer tools are available to the public: AOP Dashboard: <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/5f3d375750df46349dc78476b749cc22>
AOP Map Viewer: <https://usfs.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=05078a4220ea4a4599edec9b14a365a6>

US Fish and Wildlife Service- Tim Loux (provided oral update, notes below)

- USFWS has lots of change in regional 8 office, dealing with internal capacity challenges.
- 6 projects (including coordination) are being funded through the service.

US Fish and Wildlife Office – Jason Olive

- NFHP is going to vote to allowing FHPs to ask for more operational funding up from 85k to maybe more than 100k.

Pacific Marine Fisheries Commission- Anne Elston

- PSMFC manages California Passage Assessment Database (PAD) QA/QC, Updates, Enhancement, Maintenance. Will hear mor about this later.
- PSMFC, as the Forums fiscal agent also provides IT and admin services, handles most project agreements and manages forum budget.

NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service- Bob Pagliuco

- Anticipate 3 rounds of competitive funding for 4 funding opportunities (Fish Passage; Tribal Fish Passage; Transformational Habitat Restoration; Tribes & Underserved Communities), had round 1 already with 109 awards, 16 in California, hearing about round 2 later.

CA State Parks- Gena Lasko

- 5 District Workbooks Completed, Parks Teams using PAD, Fish Passage Working Group, Addressing erosion from roads and trails in watersheds.
- Presented 2 projects.

CA DWR- Theo Claire

- Presented 2 projects and 1 funding opportunity:
 - Big Notch at Fremont Weir Project Update
 - Hosie Low-Water Crossing on Mormon Slough Project Update
 - Riverine Stewardship & Urban Streams Restoration Programs: Funding Available!

CalTrout- Sandi Jacobson

- Presented brief overview of the 17 Projects across the state of California. One project in Napa County being presented on this afternoon.

Trout Unlimited- Anna Halligan

- Presented 2 projects in implementation, and 6 in design.

CDFW- Andrew Hampton (did not provide update)

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State Coastal Conservancy- Sam Janniches (not present, did not provide update)

Forum Administration*

Forum Budget

Sandi Jacobson presented the Forum budget on behalf of Stan Allen of PSMFC who could not attend.

*See presentation for budget details

We are paying down some admin line-items of first 5-year agreement with USFWS that started in FY20 and using next 5-agreement that started in FY23.

Status of FY22-24 Forum-Supported Projects

Holly Steindorf Presented on status of 22-24 projects.

*See presentation for Project Updates

Timing of FY25 RFP Release

- RFP already reflects NFHP reporting metrics, questions should not require much adjustment.
- Possible Timeline:
 - Release: Mid November, after many federal NOFOs have closed.
 - Close: Mid-January (2 months open, and applicants can work after holidays)
 - Review Start: End of January
 - Final section: End of February
 - Due to NFHP: March 31st

RFP Discussion summary:

Anne Elston mentions the end-of-January close is difficult being right after the holidays. Bob Pagliuco mentions a risk of pushing that later is scrambling to submit the NFHP Report March 31st. How do we balance this? Gena Lasko mentions that a solution could be to push RFP close to mid-Feb and take less time (2 weeks) for review.

Holly mentions that one reason the opening period is so long (2 months) is historical difficulty getting enough submissions. Joe Pecharich (NOAA guest) mentions that having robust outreach to partners to share RFP will help with submission numbers.

Holly to bring summary to Governance Committee and set RFP timing, goal is still RFP release mid-November.

Forum Website Tour

The Internet crashed at the start of the website tour. Holly Steindorf opted to skip the website tour at this meeting, and instead email a website tour video to the Steering Committee.

30-minute break

Forum Committee Updates*

Committee Chairs provided updates from each committee.

*See presentation for Committee Updates

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- Governance Committee- Bob Pagliuco
- Science and Data Committee – Gena Lasko and Emily Seigel
- Education and Outreach Committee
- Policy and Permitting Committee
 - Discussion of Idea of soliciting technical consultant project to identify chronic problems in permitting (both generally and for specific project types, i.e. fishways and roughened channels)
 - Sandi Jacobson introduces idea: Several well adopted infrastructure solutions have not had long-term or broad effectiveness analysis. Forum could provide a role by hiring technical consultant to generate case studies on functioning of these structures.

Case Study Discussion Summary:

- Derek Acomb (CDFW guest) mentioned that roughened ramps were considered experimental, 10 years later still experimental b/c no one has assessed effectiveness, design techniques & specs – do they need to be modified to improve effectiveness?
- Anna Halligan seconds this and mentions another knowledge gap is concrete curing times and dewatering time case study, as well as other factors to examine being structural integrity, operation parameters, soil clearance, tidal effectiveness monitoring.
- The consensus is that we would need to hire a technical consultant for this as no members have capacity.

Possible questions within Case Study:

Possibly 2-part proposal. Technical analysis of fishways/ roughened channels vs. functional assessment of burden of permitting process.

- Boulder weirs vs roughened ramps – how to decide?
- Concrete curing times and dewatering times
- Water quality considerations (temp, presence of 6PPD- chemical in tires linked to salmonid death)
- Abiotic (flow rates) & biotic (presence/absence) to assess effectiveness.
- Resources for Case Study:
- Use of arcgis map & survey123 app with shared database for easy field input with survey forms.
- Roughened ramps/channels are added to PAD.
- Pathways internship has database of roughened channels that is in its infancy.

Logistics of Soliciting Consultant

- Publish scope-of-work alongside RFP.
- Outreach job description alongside RFP, especially to NOAA technical consultants and other consultant companies and orgs.
- Adrienne Chenette (UCSC) mentions she is seeking a capstone project. Not experienced in engineering effectiveness monitoring side, but interviewing compiling and publishing results would be a good fit.

Holly to follow up with P&P Committee and Governance Committee to create job description.

National Fish Habitat Partnership Update*

* See presentation for details

Jason Olive, USFWS NFHP Coordinator, provided a presentation outlining his role with NFHP, the ACE Act, the Interagency Operations Plan, and the upcoming NFHP National Assessment.

Holly Steindorf presented the NFHP Congressional Designation Application due to NFHP on December 31st. All FHPs will need to submit a draft application to NFHP by (hopefully before) 12/31/23 for congressional designation. 6 sections. Holly will be reaching out to various Forum members and committees with requests for information to help complete the application.

Editing and Finalizing Forum Strategic Framework

Strategic Framework is 3 documents: Strategic Plan, Background Information (Includes PAD info and species recovery plans) and Appendices (includes Bylaws and MOU)

The framework is almost complete, recent major edits have been changes to Forum objectives related to the PAD and to Policy & Permitting. Want to approve those edits and resolve any outstanding comments today.

Permitting and Policy

- Changing some verbiage to be more specific and actionable.
- Forum itself cannot provide letters of support, but we could use channels to publicize policy and encourage letters of support.

Funding

- “Coordinate and secure funding for fish passage restoration” Question to steering committee members: Don’t want to block ability for forum to go for funding, but as written, is this something we want to do? NFHP funding channel satisfies this objective enough to leave it in the Strategic Plan.
- Could we bring in more funding to offer? Build a relationship with a state entity? Anna Halligan mentions idea of securing a grant that can be sub-awarded. Bob suggests this is somewhat ambitious. Determined this idea is beyond the scope of this discussion and will be discussed in governance committee.

Technical Work (PAD & FIRST Pass)

- Edited to reflect what was reasonable and able to be accomplished.
- More accurate description of pace of PAD QA/QC plan.
- Remove reference to annual reports which have not been produced and are not expected to be produced in future.
- TO BE DONE- add reference to development and outreach of FIRSTPass tool (requires additional sign-ins and therefore some technical investment. Holly to loop PSMFC in on this discussion item.

Background Info Accomplishment Tables

- TO BE DONE: Holly soliciting assistance updating 5-year accomplishment tables.
- Table 3: 2019-2023 science and data accomplishments
- Table 5: Other Accomplishments

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Bob calls for a vote to accept changes and finalize to Strategic Framework other than additions to accomplishment tables. Anna seconds. Sandi calls the question:

All in favor? Unanimous forum members. All opposed? None. Motion Passed.

Passage Assessment Database (PAD) Updates*

*See presentation for details

Anne Elston and Neal Scheraga, PSMFC presented the status of the California Passage Assessment Database, the ongoing effort to QA/QC all records, import new records, and details on the usage of the PAD and outreach to relevant entities.

Holly Steindorf presented on the status of FISHPass and of Forum talks to integrate Forum data products with the National Barrier Prioritization Tool.

FISHPass online was removed, current idea is to publicize service-center model to encourage partners to reach out with their needs to have it run through FISHPass.

Integration with National tool goal would be to create a regional high-resolution add-on to national tool using Baseline Fish Habitat Layer and periodic barrier inventory imports from the PAD. These will be incorporated at the Fish Passage Workshop in December, after which there will be more to report.

Lunch -1 hour

Sulphur Creek Fish Passage Restoration Project, Napa River Watershed, CA*

* See presentation for details

Presented by Pat Samuel (CalTrout) and Erik Schmidt (WRA Consultants), Chris Feng (WRA Consultants, and Matt Erickson (CDFW).

Presented on removal and replacement of a barrier bridge structure, considerations for historical structures, working with landowner considerations, and cost/benefit analysis of streamlined permits.

BIL Funding Roundtable Discussion- Supporting Project Partners in Accessing Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Funding*

Presentations

*Find Accompanying Presentations on <https://www.cafishpassageforum.org/events-meetings/>

Sandi Jacobson introduces the discussion: The forum works by bringing people together. Could we harness these relationships to help project partners become aware of/ be prepared to apply for federal funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)?

Agenda

- Presentations from federal agencies who have funding available.
- How the forum could support partners in accessing these funds, i.e. workshops on permitting/technical assistance.

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- How to move forward, expectations, metrics for success

Agencies Present: NOAA, USFWS, FEMA EPIC, USACE, USBOR

Bob Pagliuco (NOAA NMFS) Presents:

- Funding opportunity spreadsheet- future searchable database. <https://ifrmp.net/funding/>
- Fish passage portal. <https://interagency-bil-fish-passage-project-1-fws.hub.arcgis.com/>
- Permitting Assistance Materials from Sustainable Conservation's Accelerating Restoration Program. <https://acceleratingrestoration.org/>

FEMA Environmental Policy Innovation Center (Garrett Altmann) Presents:

- Tribal-informed project culvert remediation after wildfire.
- DOT/FHWA Culvert AOP Program
- Public assistance program (not a good source of restoration funding)
- Building resilient infrastructure & communities (BRIC)
 - You don't have to be a state to apply for BRIC - local communities, HOAs, private landowners/homeowners could apply for these funds.
- National Dam Safety Program
 - Dam needs to pose a risk to communities and human life below.
- Hazard mitigation assistance streamlining
 - Pre-calculated
 - Permit streamlining

US Army Corps of Engineers (Mindy Simmons) Presents:

- Mindy is Senior Policy Advisor, Mindy.M.Simmons@usace.army.mil
- USACE is not a granting agency, they are a partner.
- Aquatic ecosystem restoration program for major US water systems
- BIL In-stream Barrier Removal (CAP 206 "carve out")
- Corps Water Infrastructure Financing Program (CWIFP)
 - Low interest loan program for restoration financing
 - Must be related to dam safety at this time (dam removal, safety improvements that also involve fish passage), maybe in the future it could expand to other types of infrastructure
- Planning Assistance to States (PAS) Technical Assistance Program
- Sustainable rivers programs
 - Partnership with nature conservancy
 - Modify operations of Existing USACE Projects for environmental benefits while meeting authorized purposes

US Army Corps of Engineers (Kasey Sirkin) Oral Overview:

- Kasey part of team of 10 who helps with permitting for projects in CA, UT, MX, NV

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- Expedited permitting pathways, programmatic initiatives that may be relevant, even can have turnaround times of a few weeks.
- Reach out to Kasey at L.K.Sirkin@usace.army.mil.

Question: Are there any efforts for programmatic efforts for fish passage? I.e., Legacy changes to streamline permitting at the agency level?

Answer: Not that Kasey is aware of. There are USACE efforts on ways to move BIL funded projects more quickly through the system, but no named programs come to mind. National efforts to improve Fish Passage efforts would be effort of policy. Good question. Holly Steindorf: The Fish Passage Workshop in Charleston should include information on national efforts, Holly Steindorf can report back.

US Bureau of Reclamation (Robin Graber and Irene Hoiby) Present:

Irene Hoiby Presents:

- Aquatic ecosystem restoration projects (AERP)
 - Large scale projects
 - 2nd application period ends Jan 24, 2024
 - AERP Task A: Study and Design, later allows you to apply for construction funding off-cycle
 - AERP Task B: Construction
 - Dam removal or modification D.2.2.12

Robin Graber Presents:

- Environmental water resources projects
 - Smaller scale projects
 - Required conserved water to go to instream flow
 - Anticipated announcement February or March 2024, apps due 60-90 days later
 - Implementation focus, small amount of design only, though Planning & Project Design funding opportunity new this year

US Fish and Wildlife Service (Tim Loux) Oral Update:

- The BIL provided \$200 million to the program over five years to restore fish and wildlife passage by removing in-stream barriers and providing technical assistance to partners.

NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service (Bob Pagliuco)

We were running short on time at this point. Bob opted to skip his presentation to allow more time for discussion. Please see the presentation for overview of NOAA NMFS BIL Funding opportunities. Synopsis below:

- Already had round 1 (of we think 3) competitive funding rounds for BIL funding. Round 2 includes 4 funding opportunities (Fish Passage; Tribal Fish Passage; Transformational Habitat Restoration; Tribes & Underserved Communities)
- Deadlines ranged between October-December, so too late for forum involvement this year.

Discussion

How do we make all partners aware and provide organizational support for applications, while dealing with limited organization capacity ourselves?

Question: How can these work together? Can organizations apply for multiple funding BIL opportunities?

Answer: Yes. If a organization has the capacity to manage multiple applications, they can apply to multiple. Just be honest in applications about what funding has been secured.

Strategies to save applicants' time.

- Get information from funders as to which project types/areas they are most interested in/will score the best to allow them to prioritize what projects to submit.
- Start with pre-submission or letter of intent to get comments from the funder before creating full application.

Strategies to Connect funders with projects.

- If regional lists of projects are available, programs can see what projects meet their funds (especially if there are funds left to use)
- Start with a particular region/watershed with forum member contacts, reach out to PAD contacts within that region/watershed for their list of projects in planning/design without completely secured funding.
 - Use the regional project list to have connections when NOFOs come up?
- Bob mentions NOAA capacity building grants should be mentioned in this funding packet to help RCDs and other small project partners manage their project/grant/award load.
- For funding. Projects which were not funded in a prior competitive round should be contacted with other funding opportunities.
 - Will agencies share which projects did NOT get funding?
 - If not, will they share which organizations apps came in, we could contact from there and ask permission for project info?

What do project partners need? When NOFOs come out, how and when do we want to structure and disseminate this information?

- Based on reasonable pattern of NOFO release, plan webinars early and announce webinar using PAD contacts list/MailChimp.
- Bring together focused materials including eligibility info, evaluation criteria, and Sustainable Conservation accelerating restoration flowcharts for anticipating their permitting requirements.

Action Item: Holly to put other funding opportunities on forum website.

Meeting Adjourned