



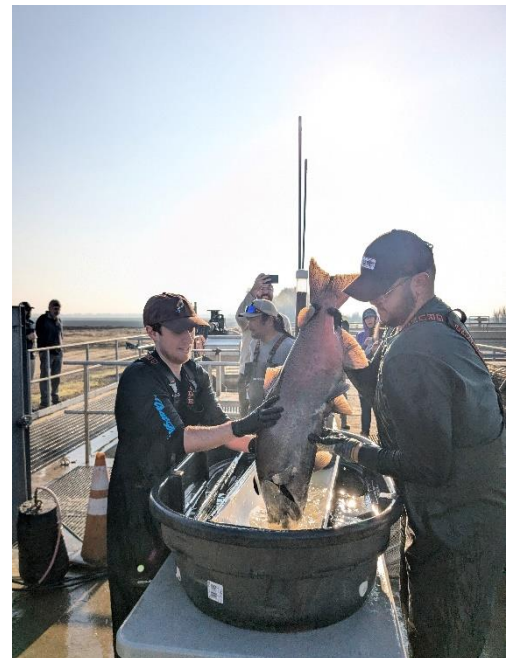
CALIFORNIA FISH PASSAGE FORUM

2024 Forum Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

Day 1- Forum Meeting- Thursday December 5th

Day 2- Sacramento Field Trips- Friday, December 6th

Photo Album: Please upload your photos of the meeting and field tours to the Google Photos album! <https://photos.app.goo.gl/QcjhGrgv1FjjsWhC9>



Day 1- Thursday, December 5th, 2024

Meeting Objectives:

- Update the committee on Forum activities and upcoming role changes
- Consider Forum function by performing a SWOT analysis
- Network and learn about exciting developments through guest partner presentations
- Finalize the 2025 Work Plan and identify the next steps for Work Plan tasks

Forum Committee Updates from 2024

Governance Committee

- Welcomed new committee members!
- Finalized 2024 Work Plan and 2025 Work Plan Draft
- Managed the outreach and onboarding of multiple new signatories (so far, EPIC and WCB)

- Supported the coordinator in hosting 3 webinars (Big one! Funding and Resources for Fish Passage Projects Informational Webinar, FRGP pre-application Q&A webinar, FHA Culvert AOP Webinar)

Science and Data Committee

- Welcomed new committee members!
- Finalized S&D activities in 2024 Forum Work Plan and drafted 2025 Forum Work Plan.
- Hosted 2 project presentations from practitioners at Science and Data Committee Meetings (DWR Hosie Low water crossing, and USFWS White Sturgeon Telemetry)
- Engaged with ~150 fish passage experts through 3 PAD Expert Review Webinars (Region 2, Region 1-coastal, Region 1-inland).
- Continued conversation on case-study for FISHPass
- Reviewed the proposal for “CA Fish Passage Structure Assessment: Evaluation of Ramp, Fishway, Weir, Channel Modification Effectiveness and Durability of Built Structures”

Policy and Permitting Committee

- Finalized P&P activities in 2024 Work Plan and drafted those in 2025 Work Plan.
- Discussion of the amount of influence Forum can have in supporting policy. Focusing more on Permitting in this Committee right now.
- Hoping to leverage and elevate great work being done by other organizations as well as synthesize new content ourselves. (Sustainable Conservation Accelerating Restoration))
- Planned suite of case studies exploring why practitioners chose their permitting pathways, and their experience with the permitting process.

Education and Outreach Committee

- Natalie Stauffer-Olson from TU steps away from the Committee.
- Welcome to Kenzie Lamb and Casen Jaquez (State Parks MPA interpreters in the Ft Bragg Area)
- Presented Forum Poster at 2024 SRF conference (thank you Ruth) and AFS Cal-Neva (Thank you Stan and Andrew!)
- Committee working on a 3-panel brochure advertising the PAD. To be finished in 2025.
- The committee continues to struggle with low membership. A communications plan developed in 2025 will help us identify target audience, key messages and communication strategies.

Updates from NFHP

Stan provided updates to the committee from the National Fish Habitat Partnership. The ACE Act has passed the house and Senate and sentiment is good it will be signed in again as law. When that happens, the match requirement for projects will be evaluated on a partnership level (not project by project), and we will have flexibility to reduce the delay between application and award for applicants.

Forum Role Transitions

The Bylaws state a 2-year staggered term (election every year alternating Chair and Vice Chair). Sandi has served for 3.5 years and is looking to transition to a new chair early 2025. Enforcing these terms helps the Forum keep fresh perspectives and prevents Chair and Forum Chair burnout. The coordinator assists the Chair and Vice Chair to reduce the duty of the position as much as possible. The Forum

needs a new Chair soon. **We are seeking nominations for Chair now. We will hold an election for Vice Chair next fall to get us back on schedule. Please consider stepping up as Forum chair for a 2-year term.**

SWOT Analysis

The committee explored the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the California Fish Passage Forum. **This information will be used to engage in activities** that maximize our strengths, address our weaknesses, seize opportunities, and mitigate or avoid threats. Below is a summary of the full committee's assessment, which is described at the end of this document.

Strengths (what we do well now)

- Fundamental nature of partnership brings diverse agencies together.
- Well organized, both in coordination and in administering funding opportunity.
- Commitment from signatories is strong, even in times when engagement is low.
- We focus on more than just salmonids.

Weaknesses (what we don't do well now)

- No membership from tribes.
- Inability to fill important committee and governance positions.
- Lack of succession planning, poor knowledge of bylaws.
- Limited membership overall, limited members for any signatory.
- Statewide scope can create disconnectedness, lack of focus.
- No process to judge our success independently from project metrics (no qualitative metrics).

Opportunities (what can increase our impact)

- Increase membership, especially tribal membership.
- Focus our communications strategy and outreach plan.
- Engage in joint work with PMEP and PLCI.
- Fund and conduct outreach through trainings and workshops (like SRF 2025)
- Engage in regional and local outreach, not just statewide.

Threats (what may slow our progress)

- Lack of membership from key players (some of this cannot be addressed- like CalTrans).
- Limited amount of funds from NFHP
- Signatories leaving without recruiting new members
- Uncertainty of funding continuation with federal changes.
- Lack of awareness of Forum in target audience.

Guest Presentations (access on Forum Intranet)

Partnering with the Mechoopda Tribe for the Iron Canyon Fish Passage Project

Holly Swan, CalTrout

He-Lo Ramirez, Mechoopda Tribe

The North Coast Salmon Stronghold

Charlie Schneider, CalTrout

Monty Schmitt, TNC

Matt Clifford, Trout Unlimited (not presenting)

The Wildcat Creek Fish Passage and Community Engagement Project

Naama Raz-Yaseef, The Watershed Project

PAD Update and Next Steps

Anne Elston presented the status of the PAD QA/QC plan. This presentation is available on the Forum intranet. The committee discussed the next steps for the PAD. **What are the next steps we should take as a Forum to advance, outreach or use the PAD?**

Key Takeaway: The PAD QA/QC plan is progressing well, the best next steps have less to do with the PAD itself, and instead focus on investing in assessment and helping fill gaps, outreaching the PAD while connecting with groups about other things, such as assessment and priorities, and updating the Fish Passage Incidental Forum and accompanying Survey 123 form.

Discussion Details:

- Communicating the RFP as a good source of funding for assessments is a good start, though the delay in funding award slows down assessments considerably.
- Even after PAD QA/QC, we should continue to do regional webinars that connect practitioners to the PAD. These could even be in-person meetings or agency meetings with a Forum representative, where experts collaborate and connect on relevant topics (e.g., recent fire, drought, barrier removed/remediated). If we have capacity, pair these with field site visits to better understand the status of a site following a change in condition.
- The Forum could coordinate working with regional/local groups to train their people on watershed assessment. Existing examples are Sherwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians, who are working to assess their ancestral lands internally with guidance from ShaRP. Can we help them/ or help groups like this?
- Central Valley monitoring of non-natal streams may indicate a lot of gaps in assessment.
- The Forum would like to be a central part of supporting these next steps for the PAD.

2025 Work Plan Development

The steering committee finished the meeting with an activity regarding our work in 2025. The committee voted on the importance of each Work Plan task, and then broke into groups to identify next steps for key tasks. The coordinator will use this work to develop committee meeting agendas. The coordinator is utilizing information from this activity to finalize the 2025 Work Plan, which will be released to the committee for final approval before the end of 2025.

The Work Plan is a shared, living document and can be found on the Forum Google Drive in Committee Files. The Forum Google Drive is accessible through the Forum Intranet (password: chinooksalmon)

<https://www.cafishpassageforum.org/intranet/>

Day 2- Friday, December 6th, 2024

Site 1- Wallace Wier Fish Passage Rescue Structure

Lead: California DWR and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, fish sampling and transfer operated by CDFW.

Purpose: Return special status migratory fish species to the Sacramento River that are unable to pass voluntarily over Wallace Weir.

Description: The project replaced a seasonal earthen dam at Wallace Weir with a permanent, operable structure that would provide year-round operational control. The project also included installation of a fish rescue facility that would return fish back to the Sacramento River and prevent upstream migration of straying adult salmonids and sturgeon into the Colusa Basin Drain

Status: Construction completed in 2016.

Site 2- Fremont Wier Big Notch Project

Lead: California DWR and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

Purpose: Allow fish to enter and hold in shallow rearing habitat through a gated passage in a notch in the Fremont Wier when the Sacramento River is high enough to enter the Yolo bypass floodplain. The project will also reduce adult salmon and sturgeon stranding and migratory delays.

Description: The project includes the removal of a section of the Fremont Weir, the installation of three gates, the excavation of 180,000 cubic yards to carve a new path for salmon, and construction of a control building and pedestrian bridge.

Status: Active construction set to be completed in 2024. Project should be mostly completed by site visit.

Site 3- Sacramento Wier Project

Lead: The US Army Corps of Engineers

Purpose: Designed to increase the volume of flood waters that can be transferred from the Sacramento River to the Yolo Bypass, provides fish passage from the Tule Canal to the Sacramento River, Alleviates fish stranding, mortality, and migration delays of Endangered Species Act (ESA)/California Endangered Species Act (CESA) listed and non-ESA/CESA listed fish species

Description: Project includes construction of a 1,455-foot-long passive weir north of needle gate Sacramento Weir, construction of a 450 linear foot fish ladder and 195 linear foot fish passage channel connecting Tule Canal (Yolo Bypass) to the Sacramento River, construction of a 1,515-foot vehicle bridge spanning the widened Sacramento Bypass/passive weir.

Status: Project is in active construction, estimated to be completed by December 2026.

Video of project site: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bq3jAOGZpyU>

Appendix- Full Summary of SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Partnerships

- Active, well-organized group.
- Ability to connect many groups together and outreach to broader community.
- Team of entities dedicated to fish and aquatic restoration.
- Coordination of many components of fish passage statewide including science and data policy and education.
- Spirit of partnership in collaboration among those involved, building relationships.
- Diverse participation and networking to share technical expertise.
- Collaboration with common goals to improve fish passage
- Representatives from diverse membership (Fed), state, NGO)
- A place for many agencies/ groups/ perspectives to come together and build relationships

Funding

- Well organized funding opportunity
- Active funding of projects

Science and Data and the PAD

- Platform for advancing innovation in design policy and efficiency.
- Coordination, collaboration, efficiency. PAD data quality Improvements
- Help to provide ideas to improve PAD data quality (PAD plan review, PAD data standards, rapid assessment protocols)

Weaknesses

Forum Function

- Lack of succession planning and poor awareness of bylaws.
- Lack of engagement from Steering Committee members, low participation in committees or in governance roles, (chair, vice chair, etc.)
- Limited time to meet and coordinate.
- Voluntary participation limits steering committee members.
- Membership is spread throughout the state and most meetings are virtual, limiting Forum connectedness.

Partnerships

- No tribal representation
- Difficulty integrating new members and building capacity for next generation.
- Limited number of members (closed membership).
- Lack of inclusion of non-member perspectives.
- Need more organizations to join the forum, including tribes and beyond committees, to help the forum think outside the box.

- Lack of time and funds to meet our goals.

Communication

- Need more regional outreach (PAD plan expert review is a good first start)
- Lack of metrics for success to evaluate our work, (especially qualitative).

Opportunities

Partnerships

- Build more long-lasting partnerships- We are in this together
- Increase number of signatories for even better representation and networking
- Encourage more membership (other NGO's especially)
- Integration of tribal representation breaking old boys club legacies of fisheries management to foster diverse coalition building and equitable funding distribution and participation.
- New signatory representatives bring new perspectives, new participation in committees, or leadership as chair and vice-chair.
- Continue to broaden membership and funding sources.
- Leverage existing efforts from other groups so as not to duplicate efforts (some of this has been done with American rivers and dam removal, but there are other groups we haven't collaborated with).

Funding

- Prop for funding for California Fisheries recovery and resilience for new projects
- Increase amount of funding for RFP.
- Undertake significant technical studies and secure monitoring funding.

Communication

- Conduct more outreach trainings (like the SRF training with Ross Taylor Spring 2025)
- Show that a little bit of funding goes a long way. Opportunity to better showcase success stories and how the form has helped.
- Research or white papers to increase forum visibility.
- Be a source of information and outreach to the public and entities about the importance of fish passage and functioning watersheds.
- Outreach to restoration practitioners to encourage and assist with projects and increase quantity and quality of proposals.
- Spend time sharing our entities priorities and perspectives, reach out to entities that may not be signatories, but that do work in fish passage.

Threats

Partnership

- Unable to fill roles and committees within the Forum.
- Limited participation on committees like education and outreach, which is important.

Communication

- Lack of new members or participants.

- Limited engagement from some key players and agencies that conduct restoration.
- Failing to reach full intended audience for RFP.
- Lack of awareness of Forum overall.

Funding

- Future development.
- Difficulty getting funding for post project or long-term monitoring.
- Funding limits from NFHP funding.
- ACE Act not renewed in future.
- Decreases in federal funding with new administration.
- Uncertainty about federal environmental regulation and funding.