



CALIFORNIA FISH PASSAGE FORUM

Policy & Permitting Committee Meetings

Present: Holly Steindorf, Sandi Jacobson, Stephanie Falzone, Erika Lovejoy, Kam Bezdek

Absent: Anna Halligan, John Sayers

Meeting attendance:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1NApL93PWEhVy2thUfWbRoe0ILJVullm5_YTjQfazKil/edit?usp=drive_link

2/5 Agenda

- Introductions (All)
- Overview of committee and review of work plan (All)
- Updates on permitting case studies, current work and next steps (Holly)
- Current and upcoming policy and legislation (CalTrout)

2/5 Meeting Minutes:

Introductions (All)

The committee skipped formal introduction since all attendees had met before. The meeting was attended by Holly Steindorf and Sandi Jacobson, Stephanie Falzone and Erica Lovejoy from Sustainable Conservation, and policy Associate Kam Bezdek from CalTrout joined to talk about current and upcoming policy.

Overview of committee and review of work plan (All)

Erica will be the designee to the forum from Sustainable Conservation, and is interested in joining the committee. Stephanie will serve as the alternate and is also interested, though her involvement may be more isolated to the permitting case studies depending on her availability and interest. The meeting time works for everybody though Stephanie and Erica request pushing it to 3:30 PM.

Kam is not joining the committee; however, we will reach out to Kam and her team periodically for policy updates to distribute internally. More on this later in the meeting.

Updates on permitting case studies, current work and next steps (Holly)

Here is the case study candidate list:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1vlj1lqMjEG2N9gunu3DStR7W1Uc7Qi0iVpcbKL9n5iY/edit?gid=0#gid=0>

Science and Data Committee Meeting Agendas- Working Document- California Fish Passage Forum

Holly is almost done with the processed transcript/ first draft of the permitting case study for Quiota Creek permitting through HREA and FRGP. A question on scope: In the interview, Tim mentioned that sometimes CDFW and WCB sometimes include a durability, maintenance or access clause that can be long, he is concerned this would discourage use of the funding or permitting pathway. Should this be included in the case study?

Sandi referenced a WCB agreement with CalTrout that does include a 10-year agreement to maintain, though doesn't think she has seen longer than that nor believes it is a common clause. Holly can draft a narrative, and the committee can decide whether to include it.

Holly will reach out to Anna for scheduling the interview with TU for the next 3 projects. Holly reached out to San Mateo RCD to have an interview for the Butano Creek Backfield Floodplain and Streamflow Enhancement Project. They are conferring internally. Erika mentions that there were some special circumstances with flow that effected that project, but it could still be a good case study with a caveat.

Communicating Policy Updates

The committee agrees it is important to keep Forum members updated on upcoming policy and legislation, even if it is informal. Kam from Cal Trout mentions that what has historically worked for them is having a 1-pager periodically developed and published by the team, or an email sent out if there is not time to develop a 1-pager. Kam will reach out to the team for collating information on federal (her team) and state (Annalise's team) policy updates.

Holly will check in by the end of the month of Feb, and Sustainable Conservation will review and add to it by early March. Holly will aim to send the policy briefing to the Forum Steering Committee mid-march.

Current and upcoming policy and legislation (CalTrout)

Federal Policy Updates

The 2nd continuing resolution may be up in March 15th in congress. Hopefully the budget bill will be there by then. Program leads are reaching out to reps and congressional members for programmatic appropriations for programs for FY26. There are proposals for environmental work, so that is not going away, though negotiations will likely be tight from the federal side.

State Policy Updates

California folks are on key committees, such as transportation, and can advocate for culvert AOP program. Huffman is chair of the natural resources committee and had been a champion. Paul Souza is the interim director of USFWS until another director is chosen. Reclamation deputy commissioner is CA David Palumbo, CalTrout gets a lot of funding from BOR.

Sustainable conservation is putting together a white paper on potential impacts of upcoming state legislation such as Prop 4 and will share it when it is ready.

Permitting News

Science and Data Committee Meeting Agendas- Working Document- California Fish Passage Forum

Holly will send out the SusCon survey about 2025 Water Board Order for Small Habitat Restoration Projects Update process to the Steering Committee this week, and publish when the draft is up for public comment.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf93HIQPXpxsGzOaeqdN4KaPg-0jlq_UM-Wz0zzmm8G5wgdew/viewform

BOR is being added to the programmatic permit USFWS restoration BO, statewide programmatic permit.

<https://acceleratingrestoration.org/permits/usfws-restoration-programmatic-biological-opinion/>

They are updating it to include new species, adding some new take of species, clarifying things for the bay. They are adding BOR and NOAA office of coastal management as a “late arriving action agencies”. This means to use the Federal BO to take species that are ESA protected. Projects getting funding from BOR will have an easier time to get coverage for working with ESA listed species. This is happening imminently.