

MEETING SUMMARY

Santa Ana Sucker Conservation Team

November 20, 2014

ATTENDEES:

Amber Heredia, BonTerra Psomas
Daniel Bott, OCWD
Dave Woelfel, RWQCB
Dick Zembal, OCWD
Elizabeth Hurst, IEUA
Gaurav Agarwal, RPU

Heather Dyer, SBVMWD
Hannah Smith, SBMWD
Jennifer Pareti, BonTerra Psomas
Jonathan Baskin, San Marino Environmental

Maricela Archer, SAWA
Karly Gaynor, WMWD
Marc Los Huertos, Pomona College
Rebecca Franklin, SBMWD
Robert Packard, MSHCP
Phone: Ilene Anderson, Center for Biological
Diversity
Phone: Kai Palenscar, USFWS
Phone: Michele Chimienti, LACDPW
Ian Achimore, SAWPA
Zyanya Blancas, SAWPA

Introductions and Announcement:

The Santa Ana Sucker Conservation Team (Conservation Team) meeting was called to order at 9:00 A.M. by Ian Achimore at the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority (SAWPA) located at 11615 Sterling Avenue, Riverside, CA 92503. Brief introductions were made.

Meeting Summary Approval:

Meeting notes from September 18, 2014 were deemed acceptable by the Conservation Team.

Guest Speaker: Michele Chimienti, LA County Department of Public Works Lead for Santa Ana Sucker Sampling on the Big Tujunga Creek

Ian Achimore introduced Michele Chimienti, Los Angeles County Department of Public Works (LACDPW) lead civil engineer on the Big Tujunga Dam seismic retrofit project. To deal with the impacts from reservoir releases, a working group was created in the early 2000s, which included the USFS and downstream stakeholders. As part of its formation, the working group agreed to monitor the Santa Ana sucker and its habitat for a ten year period between Big Tujunga Dam and Delta Flats (2009-2019). The workgroup now meets annually. The monitoring protocol was developed in 2009 in part by San Marino Environmental Associates and includes protocols for sampling both habitat and fish.

During the fish sampling, questions arose as to what method of sampling was most appropriate: snorkeling, or electroshocking. LACDPW's consultant team lead by Jennifer Pareti, Senior Biologist at BonTerra Psomas, provided a PowerPoint presentation noting results from their 2013 field surveying done by both snorkeling and electroshocking. Ms. Pareti concluded that the subject studied will determine the type of sampling method. For example, if a number count is needed, then snorkeling is the best option, but if a population structure or condition index is needed, she recommended electroshocking. It was noted that snorkeling works when there is a low number of fish. She noted it is difficult to use the same method when there is a large number of fish in the sampling area. Ms. Pareti and Amber Heredia, also of BonTerra

Psomas, noted that more information from their latest sampling would be available in December 2014 and January 2015 once all the data has been analyzed.

Ms. Pareti noted that BonTerra Psomas is collecting habitat variables every year. Of note is that as it gets dryer, there is more vegetation coming in and that the cobble was becoming more embedded. In 2014 their team measured embeddedness and pebble counts. Rainbow trout was detected in certain reaches. Non-native fish counts were noticeably increasing. Ms. Pareti noted they are not doing a standard Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program, or SWAMP, protocol. Water quality was taken, but it had not been analyzed yet.

Sucker Research and Sampling Discussion

Heather Dyer, Water Resources Project Manager of the San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District (SBVMWD), provided an update on the Upper Santa Ana River Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and the workgroup tasked with developing it. Ms. Dyer has worked with the HCP workgroup to fund a sucker population study that compares the different fish sampling methodologies. SBVMWD suggested they utilize the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) since the district already has a contract open with them. She explained that Larry Brown, a USGS research biologist, is working closely with a USGS hydrologist team that is currently developing an assessment of gravel transport characteristics of the Upper Santa Ana River. The HCP workgroup has asked them to work together to come up with a research design.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announced their second round of Section VI funding. Since then the HCP workgroup has been brainstorming goals for a proposal. Ms. Dyer is in the process of writing a grant proposal for Section VI Grant. The goals drafted include:

1. Obtain data for the HCP;
2. Support the Santa Ana Sucker Recovery Plan – The Recovery Plan is scheduled to be released as draft in December, 2014. In it, it requires the HCP to develop a methodology that will work for all the study areas; and
3. Measure habitat variables and develop a 2D suitability model.

Ms. Dyer noted that Mr. Brown has looked at Dr. Jonathan Baskin's reports and data. The focus will be to study micro habitats or variables important to micro habitats between the Rialto channel and Mission Blvd.

A discussion ensued regarding Orange County Water District's (OCWD) credits for the Sunnyslope restoration. OCWD reported that there is a sucker fish relocation issue that needs to be dealt with before receiving Sunnyslope restoration credits. Ms. Dyer informed the Conservation Team that Kai Palenscar, Fish and Wildlife Biologist of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), will be working on a reintroduction plan, which includes the habitat assessment and genetic management plan and suggested that OCWD work with Mr. Palenscar. In addition, OCWD said that their gabion project implemented several years ago was not credited because it was a study.

OCWD stated that the gabion project was very successful. It was suggested that an expert be consulted to create adjustments in the design for the gabion housing so the structures won't sink and allow for replenishing rocks while they are deployed.

The Conservation Team discussed different restoration projects that could be implemented with the remaining \$20,000 in the current FY 2014-15 Conservation Team budget and leaned toward funding a gabion project. Discussion ensued on allocating funds to support the removal of illegal off highway vehicle (OHV) use in the riverbed near wetted habitat areas for the Santa Ana sucker. It was noted that illegal OHV use takes place in the riverbed in the San Bernardino County.

The administrator of the Conservation Team, Ian Achimore of the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority, stated he would work with the Team on the FY 2014-15 budget for the next meeting.

Next Meeting and Adjournment:

The scheduling of the next Conservation Team meeting will be determined at a later time.