

MEETING SUMMARY

Santa Ana Sucker Conservation Team

September 18, 2014

ATTENDEES:

Bonnie Johnson, OCWD

Daniel Bott, OCWD

Dick Zembal, OCWD

Ed Filadelfia, City of Riverside RWQCP

Greg Herzog, RPU

Justin Nakano, CBWM

Lauren Tatum, SBMWD

Maricela Paramo, SAWA

Rebecca Franklin, SBMWD

Robert Packard, MSHCP

Phone: Christine Medak, USFWS

Phone Kai Palenscar, USFWS

Phone: Liz Hurst, IEUA

Ian Achimore, SAWPA

Mark Norton, SAWPA

Zyanya Blancas, SAWPA

Introductions and Announcement:

The Santa Ana Sucker Conservation Team (Conservation Team) meeting was called to order at 1:00 P.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 were deemed acceptable by the Conservation Team.

Critical Habitat Litigation and Other meeting topics:

No updates were provided for the critical habitat litigation.

Ian Achimore referred the Conservation Team to an article by the Highland Press titled [Fish and Wildlife Service, Local Water Agencies Partner on a Habitat Conservation Plan](#). It was said that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approved a \$675,345.00 grant for the Upper Santa Ana River Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). It will take at least two to three years to develop the HCP.

Updates on Red Algae

Ian Achimore gave a brief summary of Kai Palenscar's remarks at the August 27 Native Fish Fauna Working Group on the topic of Compsopogon Coeruleus, aka "Red Algae." Next steps for the USFWS include possibly partnering with the US Army Corps of Engineers on realigning river flow next summer (USACE has mitigation needs) and working with Riverside Corona Resource Conservation District to conduct sucker feeding surveys. The surveys will answer whether the sucker can feed and graze on a flexible surface like the Red Algae

2014 Riverwalk Planning

The next Riverwalk is scheduled for October 16, 2014. It was mentioned that volunteers are still needed. Discussion ensued on the logistics of Riverwalk's data collection. Christine Medak recommended that volunteers should be encouraged to take pictures of optimal sucker habitat and to mark the specific habitat coordinates.

Restoration Project Updates

Sunnyslope Creek:

Bonnie Johnson gave a brief report on their efforts to remove huge blockages in the river. The unexpected storms dislodged cattails that were on the cemented part of the channel. The center section of the creek is dry. SAWA saw one sucker fish in the July/August timeframe in the lower section of the creek. There was some concern about the amount of sand in the confluence and low water flow. Dick Zembal emphasized it is not currently spawning season.

Dan Bott reported that OCWD is moving forward on the suggestion of adding Sunnyslope to the mitigation program for the agency's sediment management demonstration project behind Prado Dam. He stated that an implementation of a 10 gabion rock project will take place along the Santa Ana River mainstem. The agency plans on having permits in place by the first quarter of 2015. Dick Zembal added that this process is an expeditious way to get permits for Sunnyslope work. He stated that they need to get serious about getting an easement or an agreement in recognition of what has been and will be accomplished at Sunnyslope.

The 10 gabions will be installed right above River Road Bridge. A more flexible basket for the gabions will be installed which will allow for easy access when adding materials as the gabions begin to sink. The gabion locations were chosen due to their visual and physical accessibility. OCWD owns the land that the gabions will be located.

Tequesquite Creek:

It was reported that Tequesquite Creek has been restored, but as of right now there is no water in the creek. Ian Achimore said that about eight months ago Kerwin Russell with the Riverside Corona Resource Conservation District mentioned looking into buying well water to place in Tequesquite Creek.

The Conservation Team Budget and Priority Studies

Ian Achimore presented FY 2014-15 budget. It was asked that attendees share what their agencies would like to see the Conservation Team focus on in the next year.

1. Greg Herzog, RPU - How does the system change throughout the year and how resilient is the sucker fish to those changes?
2. Ed Filedalfia, City of Riverside RWQCP - Interested in river activities that may affect Riverside's discharge.
3. Justin Nakano, CBWM- Interested in things that might change the flow of the river and water quality coming down the river. Recharge coming into the Chino Basin has an influence on water resource agency operations.
4. Rebecca Franklin, SBMWD - Interesting to obtaining a robust scientific study that explores all of the different variables in the river and has a detailed analysis of what variables are most important.
5. Maricela Paramo, SAWA - Interested in the general health of the sucker and update the group on Sunnyslope.

6. Bonnie Johnson, OCWD – Interested in staying up-to-date what other agencies are doing in the river and providing answers from other agencies regarding the river.
7. Bob Packard, MSHCP– Interested in any information regarding the sucker fish and arroyo chub. They rely heavily on SAWA and Jonathan Baskin’s population reports.
8. Dan Bott, OCWD – Interested in new information about restorations and obtaining permits.

An updated memo regarding *Research and Project Activities for the Santa Ana Sucker Recovery within the Santa Ana River Watershed* was released on September 11, 2014. Additions included:

- If the drought continues, pay for well water to keep tributary sites flowing through spawning season;
- Vet past survey methodologies to assess the most appropriate sampling technique;
- Assess sensitivity to environmental conditions, or fluctuating conditions (eg – water temperature);
- Determine optimal habitat conditions for spawning;
- Determine optimal conditions for feeding;
- Determine how *Compsopogon coeruleus* impacts sucker foraging and spawning success;
- Reduce predation by aquatic predators;
- Assess the potential for fish ladders as well as low-flow designs for use within concrete-lined channels to address fish passage;
- Environmentally friendly methods to encourage in-stream channelization so as to increase the abundance of rocky substrate;
- Work with the USFWS to craft range expansion plan(s);
- Reduce Off-road vehicle use.

It was recommended that population surveys be taken throughout the year. Christine Medak advised that population surveys throughout the year could be problematic as it may affect the sucker fish in times of spawning or when they are juvenile. Timing of spawning could vary depending on rain. Christine Medak recommended that time and money be invested in figuring out what is the best way to monitor sucker fish and their habitat before moving forward with population studies. Data on characteristics of specific locations in the Santa Ana River were collected by Jonathan Baskin in the early 2000.

Dan Bott said that his focus is identifying and restoring suitable tributaries. He was against the population studies and emphasized that restoring habitats is more “bang for the buck” for the fish.

Questions arose regarding the type of relationship the Conservation Team will have with the Upper Santa Ana River HCP. Ian Achimore will work with SBVMWD to coordinate.

Next Meeting and Adjournment:

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

Handouts/Presentations (available at www.sawpa.org)

1. SAS Con Team Research and Projects Presentation – Ian Achimore