

November 15, 2004

## **Final KEY OUTCOMES MEMORANDUM** **Merced River Stakeholders Meeting**

This Key Outcomes Memorandum summarizes main discussion points that arose during the meeting, as well as any agreement by the group for action. The following is a final summary of the meeting outcomes that the stakeholders approved at their Jan. 24, 2005 meeting.

The Stakeholder's meeting was held from 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm at the Merced Tri-College Center in Merced, CA. Approximately 20 stakeholders attended the meeting, including representatives of the public, landowners, agency, and special interest groups; the attendance sheet will be attached to the Final Key Outcomes Memorandum and placed on file with East Merced Resource Conservation District, 2135 Wardrobe, Merced, CA.

The Key Outcome Memorandum from the September 20, 2004 meeting was not discussed and will be proposed for consideration at the January meeting. See the September 20<sup>th</sup> KOM for more information.

### 1. Updates

- Merced Irrigation District Update: (Ted Selb, Merced Irrigation District)
  - The SWRCB has approved for a 2-year period a temporary water transfer from Lake McClure storage, if necessary, in order to meet the flow requirements of the Cowell Agreement. The SWRCB order stipulates that by the end of the 2005 irrigation season, a resolution must be reached between the Cowell Agreement diverters and MID to resolve the issue of releasing stored water from Lake McClure to Cowell Agreement lands.
  - The October fall pulse flow releases from Lake McClure to the lower Merced River were completed on October 31<sup>st</sup> for the benefit of adult Fall-run Chinook salmon and to help alleviate dissolved oxygen issues in the Delta. The flow in the lower Merced River peaked at 552 cubic feet per second. Beginning on November 1<sup>st</sup>, and extending through March 31, river flows will be between 180-220 cubic feet/sec (CFS).
  - MID continues to work with CDFG on drafting a contract to assist in funding the Merced River Hatchery near Snelling. The annual budget for the Hatchery is \$400,000, of which the 4-Pumps Agreement will fund 47%, while the MID and its sister irrigation districts participating in the Vernalis Adaptive Management Plan (VAMP) will fund the remainder.
  - The San Joaquin Tributary Association, comprised of the Merced, Turlock, Modesto, South San Joaquin and Oakdale Irrigation

Districts, has applied for a grant to join the on-going efforts on the Stanislaus River in conducting temperature modeling on the San Joaquin River and its 3 tributaries.

- The CDFG has requested the support of MID in its efforts to receive a grant to operate a rotary screw fish trap on the lower Merced River near Cressey.
- Merced County Planning Update: (Bill Nicholson, Merced County Planning)  
Not present.

2. Merced River Ranch: Field Trip Report & Update Design Component, (Pete Downs, Stillwater Sciences) See handout from Merced River Ranch Tour (attached to KOM on file w/EMRCD). Pete made a presentation on the project and also on the tour held earlier in the day. He stated that the project is at a critical phase: that they are now charged with coming up with 3 designs simultaneously: channel design, monitoring, and the rest of Merced River Ranch. One prospect for further funding might be the next round of CALFED ERP submissions. However, it is unlikely that the project will be ready for submission by then. He asked the stakeholders if they were interested in spending the next meeting giving input on the design of the channel.

General Discussion: At what point are stakeholders being asked for input? Pat Ferrigno expressed the concern that the stakeholders are being asked to “rubber-stamp” something Stillwater has already decided on and cited the Merced River Restoration Plan (MRRP) as previous experience. Pete Downs responded that he intends the January 24<sup>th</sup> meeting to be an interactive session to get input from stakeholders on possible designs for the project. He agreed to get documents to Teri before Christmas to be distributed to the stakeholders with the next agenda. Lydia Miller asked if the technical advisory group (TAC) Pete referred to will be separate from the MRS as was done with the MRRP. She is concerned, if so, because the agencies stopped coming to the MRS meetings and participated in that instead. What will the impact of the Merced River Ranch project be on future direction of restoration projects? Jill Ratzlaff wanted more information incorporated into the study on what has been done in the past with Merced River restoration projects. Cindy Lashbrook felt that the design conceptualization session would be a good exercise for the MRS. Cathy Weber asked if the TAC would be different with this project than it had been in the past. All stakeholders present were in favor of participating in an interactive design session. Lydia Miller again stated that the TAC should be an open group. Pat Bettencourt noted the history of the MRRP and the fact that the MRS was compelled to go along. She asked how many of the agency people at the meeting were involved with the MRRP and stated that landowners do not wish to re-educate rotating agency personnel about this history. Jean Kiel noted that she found the original negative declaration for the project and the CSUF concept design document on the Internet using Google. Concern was expressed about the amount of input the stakeholders will have on a design that might be submitted for a grant program within 6 weeks of the stakeholders seeing it. Pete responded that it is highly unlikely and improbable that a proposal could be or would be readied that quickly. Teri noted that the group was displaying enthusiasm for participating in the design session and noted that although the MRS has decided its role to be “information exchange,” there is a clear interest in participating in projects. She asked the group to give some thought to just exactly what they want to do – exchange info or be more proactive – in the future. One of the stakeholders suggested an evaluation component of the successes and failures of the Robinson and Ratzlaff projects be done and presented to the MRS. It was suggested that Kevin Faulkenberry and Randy Mager be invited to come and present at a future meeting. Larry Hansen, USFWS, noted that in light of the MRS

concern about agency participation, MRS can contact each agency and request that staff be assigned to participate.

During the discussion, the stakeholders decided to divert from the published agenda in order to have an interactive session to provide input on the Merced River Ranch conceptual design plan. The group was polled about their interest in participating in the design session at the next meeting and was unanimous that they wanted to do so.

Actions to be taken:

The January meeting will be dedicated exclusively (except for regular "house-keeping" items) to working with Stillwater to conceptualize potential designs for the River channel.

3. Presentation on local activities of Trust for Public Lands, Erik Vink (item cancelled, Erik Vink unable to attend)

4. Update on other Group Activities on River, (Teri Murrison), item cancelled due to discussion on Merced River Ranch

5. Revisit MRRP Prioritized Actions, (Teri Murrison), item cancelled due to discussion on Merced River Ranch

Announcements:

- Teri read from an email from Kimberly Steinmann at UC, Davis, that the Land Air and Water Resources Dept. there is submitting a grant proposal to the State Water Resources Control Board's Agricultural Water Quality Grant Program to reduce organophosphate runoff from walnut orchards in Merced, Stanislaus, and San Joaquin Counties. The proposed project will promote the reduction of organophosphate use by researching the economic viability of the newest innovative forms of sprayable forms of pheromone mating disruption, an IPM control for codling moth. Extensive outreach and an economic analysis will provide both growers and policy makers with needed information to make cost effective, sustainable pest management decisions. For more information, contact Kimberly Steinmann at [kpsteinmann@ucdavis.edu](mailto:kpsteinmann@ucdavis.edu).
- Gwen Huff announced a CAFF Seminar, Landowner Rights & Responsibilities, to be held Tuesday, December 14, 6-8 pm at the Merced Agricultural Center Classroom, 2145 Wardrobe, Merced. It will include presentations by a land use attorney, CDFG, and the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board.
- Cindy Lashbrook announced an upcoming Ag Waiver workshop to be held November 16<sup>th</sup> at the Stanislaus Ag Center.
- Pat Brantley noted that Boating and Waterways has notified her they will begin working on getting rid of water hyacinth on the Ratzlaff's pond in April 2005.

Items on next agenda:

- The next agenda will be devoted exclusively to Merced River Ranch comments and design (in addition to usual house-keeping items)

Next Meeting: Again, please note the time and location: from 6:00-8:00 pm, Monday, January 24, 2005, at the Board Room, Tri-College Center, Tri-College Drive (take G Street and turn left on Cornucopia Way), Merced.

Snacks: Jean Kiel, snacks; Cindy Lashbrook, drinks.

For more information, contact Teri Murrison at 209-852-0112 or [info@mercedriverstakeholders.org](mailto:info@mercedriverstakeholders.org).

September 20, 2004

## **FINAL KEY OUTCOMES MEMORANDUM**

### **Merced River Stakeholders Meeting**

This Key Outcomes Memorandum summarizes main discussion points that arose during the meeting, as well as any agreement by the group for action. The following is a final summary of the meeting outcomes that the stakeholders approved at their Mar. 21, 2005 meeting.

The Stakeholder's meeting was held from 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm at the Merced County Farm Bureau office in Merced, CA. Approximately 23 stakeholders attended the meeting, including representatives of the public, landowners, agency, and special interest groups; the attendance sheet will be attached to the Final Key Outcomes Memorandum and placed on file with East Merced Resource Conservation District, 2135 Wardrobe, Merced, CA.

The Key Outcome Memorandum from the July 19, 2004 meeting was approved with the following revisions:

- MID Update:
  - Merced River Hatchery Closure: California Department of Fish & Game (CDFG) has proposed to the Delta Pumping Plant Fish Protection Agreement Advisory Committee (Four Pumps Committee) that the committee should increase its annual funding to CDFG for the continued operations/maintenance of the CDFG's Fall-run Chinook Salmon Hatchery, located adjacent to the Merced River near Snelling, from approximately \$50,000 to \$150,000. This will leave approximately \$200,000 of the hatchery's annual budget unfunded. MID is meeting with CDFG to figure out how to fund the remainder. CDFG has also promised to continue funding of the hatchery through September while funding negotiations are in progress.
  - Cowell Agreement Water Transfer: The State Water Resource Control Board asked for public comment on MID's intent to temporarily transfer up to 25,000 acre feet of water in 2004 to riparian and other water users along the Merced River who are party to the Cowell Agreement. This is a continuation of water released from Lake McClure that has been historically transferred since 1926 as a part of the Cowell Agreement and involves no new water being distributed. The State Water Resource Control Board will be the lead agency on the CEQA process for this proposed transfer.
- Merced River Ranch Update:
  - Technical Memo #5 assessed the occurrence of Mercury at the Merced River Ranch. Stillwater sampled dredger tailings in-place, sampled residue of processed tailings, monitored Mercury in control sites, and monitored biota at 5 different sample sites. Biological indicator tests were conducted on caddis fly larvae and Prickly Sculpin. Total Mercury levels in fine materials were measured, as was Mercury leached from washed vs. dry-sorted materials. Methyl mercury was measured in fine materials and aqueous methyl mercury was measured and assessed. Key findings were: "Mercury levels in fine sediments from sampled dredger tailings at the MRR were below or within the range of natural background levels for California's Central Valley; and There were no discernable vertical

patterns, areal or longitudinal differences in Mercury distribution above the groundwater table in the sampled dredger tailings; strong relationship between Hg and fine sediments confirms gravel sorting and washing selectively removes Hg, although washing has no measurable effect on gravel-cobble in the 13-150 mm range; and ~~relatively high aqueous MeHg concentrations in ponds that a large fraction of the total mercury is bioavailable~~, "The relatively high aqueous MeHg concentrations found in the ponds at the MRR and the Below Hwy 59 RM 41 site suggested that a large fraction of the total mercury present was bioavailable." but downstream trends suggest that the dredger tailings contribute relatively low levels of Mercury to the lower Merced River."

## 1. Updates

- Merced Irrigation District Update: (Teri Murrison for Ted Selb, Merced Irrigation District) Ted Selb was unable to attend.
  - MID is now working on planning mid-October fish flows. The anticipated flows will be approximately 12,500 acre feet. The responsible agencies are working on the final scheduling at present.
- Merced County Planning Update: (Bill Nicholson, Merced County Planning) Not present.

## 2. Web-based Watershed Inventory Systems Presentations

- Watershed Information Model (WIM), Chris Glover, Western Shasta RCD (See [Power Point presentation](#) attached);
- Watershed Portal, David Siedband, Wolf & Associates (See [Outline](#) attached);

General Discussion: What are the systems' ability to connect regionally with other systems? (Glenn Anderson) The systems are very flexible and can easily connect to other systems. (Chris). How is the Whiskeytown Education project funded? (Pat Ferrigno) A collaborative effort by the National Park Service, US Forest Service, the Whiskeytown Environmental School, the Western Shasta RCD, and others funds the project. (Chris) How is the WIM Website maintained – by a college or other agency? (Pat Ferrigno) The WIM system is maintained by Shasta College under an MOU with Western Shasta RCD. (Chris) The Watershed Portal system is maintained by users with oversight of a voluntary editorial group. How do you know that what is posted is correct/sound science? (Joe Mitchell) The editorial group decides the criteria and is in charge of that. (David)

3. SLEWS Presentation (Susie Douglas, Student and Landowner Education and Watershed Stewardship program) Susie showed a PowerPoint presentation of the student/landowner projects coordinated by SLEWS and spoke of the opportunities that will exist after this school year for local students to participate. [View text of Susie's presentation here.](#)

## Actions to be taken:

- Teri asked the stakeholders if they are interested in further investigating possible sources of funding to establish an info development and exchange project like WIM/Watershed Portal, incorporating elements of both systems. Lydia Miller said that the stakeholders don't know what other groups are doing and that we shouldn't proceed until we know so we avoid duplication of effort. Stakeholders

asked Teri to speak with other groups working on the River to find out what else is going on. People to be consulted include: Sam Traina of UC, Merced, Audrey Robinson of Merced River Education Initiative, Eric Dressler of the Merced River Foundation, the Upper Merced River Watershed Council, Merced Irrigation District, etc.

- Pete Downs of Stillwater Sciences asked the group if they would like to take a field trip to the Merced River Ranch before the next meeting. The stakeholders asked Teri to schedule it the same day as the next meeting (Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>).

#### Announcements:

- Prop 13 Grant for Merced River Alliance: The State Water Resource Control Board will be considering awarding the pending grant to the EMRCD on September 30th.
- The California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD) will be holding a Symposium on Rangeland Strategies for Sustainability in Paso Robles, November 15 & 16. It will be followed by their annual conference in San Luis Obispo on November 17-20. For more info, see [www.carcd.org](http://www.carcd.org).
- Teri has free Watershed Academy Training CDs from the EPA . If you are interested in obtaining one, please contact her.
- Ben Wallace, CRMP Coordinator with CARCD introduced himself and his program to the stakeholders.
- Ocean Jones, English teacher with Merced Union High School District updated stakeholders on the implementation of River of Words in Merced High School.

#### Items on next agenda:

- Discuss efforts of different groups working in the watershed and how to better collaborate:
  - Who is doing what, where?
  - How can we work together to achieve goals?
- Revisit MRRP prioritized actions;
- What are present Stakeholder priorities for upcoming projects and funding proposals?

Next Meeting: Again, please note the time and location changes: from 6:00-8:00 pm, Monday, November 15, 2004, at the Board Room, Tri-College Center, Tri-College Drive (take G Street and turn left on Cornucopia Way), Merced.

Snacks: Potluck holiday snacks! Please bring a plate of your favorite holiday goodies to share.

For more information, contact Teri Murrison at 209-852-0112 or [info@mercedriverstakeholders.org](mailto:info@mercedriverstakeholders.org).

July 19, 2004

## **Final KEY OUTCOMES MEMORANDUM Merced River Stakeholders Meeting**

This Key Outcomes Memorandum summarizes main discussion points that arose during the meeting, as well as any agreement by the group for action. It was approved by the MRS at their September 20, 2004 meeting.

The Stakeholder group meeting was held from 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm at the UC Cooperative Extension Classroom Building, 2145 Wardrobe, and Merced, CA. Approximately 22 stakeholders attended the meeting, including representatives of the public, landowners, agency, and special interest groups; the attendance sheet will be attached to the Final Key Outcomes Memorandum and placed on file with East Merced Resource Conservation District, 2135 Wardrobe, Merced, CA.

The Key Outcome Memorandum from the May 17, 2004 meeting was approved with the following revisions:

- Page 2, paragraph 2: Sentence revised to say, "[The MRZ Zone](#) policy referenced this MRRP Plan, but it was not used as policy."
- Page 2: spelling changed on Madelyn Martinez' name
- Page 4: Announcement: The Merced River Fair will be held on Saturday, August 7, in Henderson Park in Snelling. Flyers were available at the meeting.

### 1. Updates

Merced Irrigation District Update: (Ted Selb, Merced Irrigation District)

1. Merced River Hatchery Closure: California Department of Fish & Game (CDFG) has proposed to the Delta Pumping Plant Fish Protection Agreement Advisory Committee (Four Pumps Committee) that the committee should increase its annual funding to CDFG for the continued operations/maintenance of the CDFG's Fall-run Chinook Salmon Hatchery, located adjacent to the Merced River near Snelling, from approximately \$50,000 to \$150,000. This will leave approximately \$200,000 of the hatchery's annual budget unfunded. MID is meeting with CDFG to figure out how to fund the remainder. CDFG has also promised to continue funding of the hatchery through September while funding negotiations are in progress.
2. Cowell Agreement Water Transfer: The State Water Resource Control Board asked for public comment on MID's intent to temporarily transfer up to 25,000 acre feet of water in 2004 to riparian and other water users along the Merced River who are party to the Cowell Agreement. This is a continuation of water released from Lake McClure that has been historically transferred since 1926 as a part of the Cowell Agreement and involves no new water being distributed. The State Water Resource Control Board will be the lead agency on the CEQA process for this proposed transfer.

Merced County Planning Update: (Bill Nicholson, Merced County Planning) Not present.

### 2. Presentation on Merced River Foundation, Eric Tressler

Eric Tressler made a presentation on his proposed Merced River Foundation. He will forward a copy of the Power Point presentation to Teri for incorporation into this KOM. He proposes the formation of a foundation to protect river resources and successfully manage all resources, plan for future water needs, study the Merced River watershed, lead/guide by example of collaboration to manage diverse needs. His vision is to use the Merced River and watershed as a lab for research and education, a think tank, and to collect data, and promote policy. He plans to have science and research, irrigation research, lake and dam research, education (scholarships, internships, summer work programs, and seminars and workshops), grant funding programs. He foresees the Foundation's being funded through private fundraising, grants, and partnerships with agencies. He is proposing the formation of a 501(c)3 non profit company to collect and provide reliable scientific data.

#### General Discussion:

It seems that this group would be in competition for the same funding the MRS is pursuing. This adds another layer. I do like the water studies. (Pete Downs) There should be more emphasis on the lower reach of the River (Madelyn Martinez). It sounds like an ambitious undertaking. There will be many programs and interests also seeking funding. What is Water 2025? (Pat Brantley). Water 2025 was held to evaluate western water needs and resources and plan for the future through 2025. There is information on Water 2025 on the Department of Interior's Website. (Eric Tressler). These sound like good ideas, but the lower reach is different than the upper reach. (Dave Hu) We [MRS] have been doing this for 5 years. We need to incorporate this process and aggregate mining. (Michelle Cunningham) The coordination and compilation idea is good. Does Sam Traina foresee UC Merced having a role? (Cathy Weber) They will do their own research, but we have talked to them. It's premature to speculate at this point. (Eric Tressler) Our mission statement is similar. Agencies and stakeholders have been doing this already. These issues could be incorporated into our process. (Lydia Miller) The water district is actually below the dam. The photos should reflect that. Groundwater recharge should be included. (Bernie Wade) The MID Board hasn't heard the presentation yet, but staff is encouraged. It is ambitious. It should address the upper and lower reaches. (Ted Selb) Who are the players in the foundation? (Jon Kelsey) I will provide Teri with a list and she can distribute it by email. (Eric Tressler) Who are the principals and what were the founding motives? (Ezio Sansoni)

#### 3. Merced River Ranch Update (Pete Downs, Stillwater Sciences)

Pete gave the stakeholders a Power Point update on the progress to date on the Merced River Ranch. A copy of the Power Point presentation is on file with the original minutes in the EMRCD office. Highlights are as follows:

The goal of the Project was "to design pilot floodplain and channel restoration experiments, in their watershed context, intended to initiate the restoration of the natural ecosystem function to the Dredger Tailings Reach of the Merced River and set in place monitoring and evaluation schemes designed to contribute transferable scientific understanding that assists in reducing uncertainty in restoration design." Objectives are:

- Balance sediment supply and transport capacity to allow the accumulation and retention of spawning gravel and prevent riparian encroachment;
- Restore floodplain functions to improve the establishment of riparian vegetation and the quality of riparian habitat;
- Increase in in-channel habitat complexity to improve aquatic habitat for native aquatic species; and

- Scale low-flow and bankfull channel geometry to current flow conditions.

Work plan: Conduct reach-scale scientific assessments of the 7-mile Dredger Tailings Reach; develop conceptual designs for floodplain restoration and gravel augmentation of the 318-acre Merced River Ranch; and complete planning tasks to guide future floodplain restoration and gravel augmentation of the riparian MRR.

Five technical memoranda have been generated by Stillwater to date. They are: #1 Channel & Floodplain Surveys (03/04); #2 Hydraulic Model (04/04); #3 Sediment Transport Model (05/04); #4 Volume and Texture Analysis (06/04); and #5. Mercury Assessment (06/04).

- For #1, channel and floodplain surveys were conducted as the basis for the design of floodplain restoration and gravel augmentation. Forty cross-sections were taken to create a long profile downstream of Crocker-Huffman Dam. Stillwater studied photogrammetry, facies mapping, pebble counts, and median bed particle size.
- Technical Memo #2 developed and applied hydraulic models to predict current and post-restoration flood levels in the Dredger Tailings reach. The model results suggest that "in its current configuration, flows up to the 10-year flood (6,640cfs) cause almost no inundation, and even the 100-year flood (14,900cfs) would cause very limited inundation.
- Technical Memo #3 detailed the development and application of a detailed sediment transport model for designing gravel infusion and long-term gravel augmentation. Changes in sediment thickness and sediment mobility in the wettest years were examined. Key findings were: "daily mean flows over the last 30 years have been largely incapable of inundating the floodplain and have not had the required energy to mobilize the existing channel bed except in a few locations during extremely high flow events; introduced gravel has some localized effect in aggrading the channel bed and decreasing surface median grain size; and ongoing gravel augmentation and wing dam construction have not resulted in reach-scale effects on the study reach.
- Technical Memo #4 detailed the volume and texture of Dredger Tailings in the Merced River Ranch and the Dredger Tailings Reach. "Minimal stratigraphic differentiation was observed, based on initial grading assumptions, 3.2 M yd<sup>3</sup> of tailings are available within the MRR, of which 2.7M cu.yd<sup>3</sup> may be of use in restoration; and primary processing costs are association with haulage.
- Tehnical Memo #5 assessed the occurrence of Mercury at the Merced River Ranch. Stillwater sampled dredger tailings in-place, sampled residue of processed tailings, monitored Mercury in control sites, and monitored biota at 5 different sample sites. Biological indicator tests were conducted on caddis fly larvae and Prickly Sculpin. Total Mercury levels in fine materials were measured, as was Mercury leached from washed vs. dry-sorted materials. Methyl mercury was measured in fine materials and aqueous methyl mercury was measured and assessed. Key findings were: "Mercury levels in fine sediments from sampled dredger tailings at the MRR were below or within the range of natural background levels for California's Central Valley; and There were no discernable vertical patterns, areal or longitudinal differences in Mercury distribution above the groundwater table in the sampled dredger tailings; strong relationship between Hg and fine sediments confirms gravel sorting and washing selectively removes Hg, although washing has no measurable effect on gravel-cobble in the 13-150 mm range; and, "The relatively high aqueous MeHg concentrations found in the ponds at the MRR and the Below Hwy 59 RM 41 site suggested that a large fraction of the total mercury present was bioavailable." but downstream trends

suggest that the dredger tailings contribute relatively low levels of Mercury to the lower Merced River.”

Baseline monitoring, riparian vegetation experiments, and the conceptual restoration design are ongoing. The Project will conclude in April 2006. Project partners are Stillwater Sciences, CDFG, and URS.

Actions to be taken:

- Eric Tressler will forward the names of the principals of the Merced River Foundation and the motivation for founding it to Teri and she will email it out to stakeholders.
- Teri will obtain the MRRP mailing list from Stillwater Sciences and send the following addendum on stickers for affixing to the MRRP:

“The Merced River Stakeholder Group recognizes the Merced River Corridor Restoration Plan as a reference document and not as policy. The Merced River Stakeholder Group recommends that other available studies and reports – both complete and in process – be included in making decisions related to the Merced River Watershed. Additional guidance can be obtained from the MRS Website at <http://www.mercedriverstakeholders.org/MRS/restoration%20plan.htm> or by contacting Watershed Coordinator, Teri Murrison, at 209-722-4119, X3.”

Announcements:

1. Cathy Weber announced the Merced River Fair will be held August 7<sup>th</sup> at Henderson Park in Snelling. She asked for volunteers to operate a Merced River Stakeholders table. Various stakeholders plan to attend and help out.
2. Bernie Wade discussed attending the recent CALFED Science Program and Ecosystem Restoration Program’s Rivers, Rocks, and Restoration: Learning from the past and questions for the future workshop on July 13 and 14<sup>th</sup>. He stated that the workshop was quite interesting and worthwhile and a number of former participants in the MRS were in attendance.

Items on next agenda: Watershed Portal Website and Watershed Information Model presentations for applicability to MRS’ watershed inventory project (ongoing) and a presentation by SLEWS (Student and Landowner Education and Watershed Stewardship).

Next Meeting: Please note the time and location changes: from 6:00-8:00 pm, Monday, September 20, 2004, at the Merced County Farm Bureau office located at 646 S. Hwy 59 (Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.) in Merced, CA. Bernie Wade will bring snacks and Cathy Weber will bring beverages.

Plus/Delta: The stakeholders liked that presentations were made in a timely manner and handled fairly. Things that could be changed included having a decision-making/voting mechanism and more resolution to issues.

For more information, contact Teri Murrison at 209-852-0112 or [info@mercedriverstakeholders.org](mailto:info@mercedriverstakeholders.org).

May 17, 2004

## **Final KEY OUTCOMES MEMORANDUM Merced River Stakeholders Meeting**

This Key Outcomes Memorandum summarizes main discussion points that arose during the meeting, as well as any agreement by the group for action. It was approved by the MRS at their July 19, 2004 meeting.

The Stakeholder group meeting was held from 6:30 pm – 8:34 pm at the UC Cooperative Extension Classroom Building, 2145 Wardrobe, and Merced, CA. Approximately 18 stakeholders attended the meeting, including representatives of the public, landowners, agency, and special interest groups; the attendance sheet will be attached to the Final Key Outcomes Memorandum and placed on file with East Merced Resource Conservation District, 2135 Wardrobe, Merced, CA.

### 1. Updates

Merced Irrigation District Update: (Ted Selb, Merced Irrigation District) Regarding the current status of the Vernalis Adaptive Management Plan (VAMP). The 2004 VAMP is complete and River flows are back down. Preliminary data are that MID released 43,500 acre feet and the total released (including other tributaries) was 68,100 acre feet.

Merced River Hatchery funding: No news to report except that MID has an appointment with California Department of Fish and Game on May 28<sup>th</sup> to discuss a joint CDFG & MID funding effort to keep the hatchery open. MID anticipates contracting the facility out to a hatchery manager.

There will be a Merced Area Groundwater Pool Interests Advisory Panel meeting on Weds, May 19 from 2:00-4:00 pm. Stakeholders are invited to attend. On the agenda for discussion are urban pumping trends, publishing a general information piece on the Merced groundwater basin, and the development of an Ag water management plan.

Merced County Planning Update: (Bill Nicholson, Merced County Planning) No new plans are pending. Litigation on mining projects continues.

### 2. Continued Discussion of Current Usage of the Merced River Restoration Plan to Establish Policy

Jeff McLain, USFWS, made a presentation on the history of the Anadromous Fish Restoration Program's (AFRP) involvement on the Merced River. A copy of the Power Point presentation slides will be attached to the final minutes and be placed on file at the office of the East Merced Resource Conservation District. The following comments/questions were raised (comments are followed by the names of those who made them, where possible).

How much AFRP money went into the Robinson Project? (Joe Mitchell) A small amount of AFRP money was spent on the NEPA process for the Project. (Jeff McLain) Are their salmonids above the Crocker Huffman dam? (Glenn Anderson) MID is working on evaluating the feasibility of salmonids passing above the dam. There is a currently existing but non-functional fish ladder (built circa 1910). (Jeff McLain) When was Friant Dam built and did it affect the salmonids? (Glenn Anderson) Salmonids can't go beyond

the Mendota Pool anyway. (Jeff McLain) Won't the proposed hatchery closure affect numbers? (Bill Nicholson) Yes. (Jeff McLain)

If that is the case, why is CDFG continuing funding to the Merced River Ranch? (Joe Mitchell) The Merced River Ranch is actually a CALFED Bay Delta funded project. It comes from a different pot of money. (Jeff McLain) The River Ranch is CDFG's own source of aggregate. They had planned to do a restoration plan too, but CALFED felt it was too big a project. (Pete Downs) The advantage of having the Merced River Ranch is that the CDFG has an available source of aggregate and it takes less paperwork to access it. (Madelyn Martinez) The primary AFRP focus is on natural production, not hatchery fish. The gravel is useful in the River for the fish to spawn there. (Jeff McLain) What percentage of fish in the River are hatchery fish? (Glenn Anderson) On the Tuolumne River it's 10-20%, but varies from year to year. (Jeff McLain)

#### General Discussion:

With regard to the MRRP, was the recommended setback the only issue? (Jeff McLain) No, others are habitat, invasives, and rip rap. (Lydia Miller) Does the MRRP recommend eradicating habitat? (Jeff McLain) Some landowners understand this to be so. It also includes the width of the floodplain, consideration of the type and number of species, and water quality monitoring. (Lydia Miller and others)

#### Purpose of the Discussion:

- use of the MRRP – some stakeholders are concerned of use without public review and its use by the County in the planning process;

Perhaps it's an issue to take up with the County since it is not intended as policy and agencies use it as guidance. (Jeff McLain) Applicants are using the document as 'guidelines' in land use. (Joe Mitchell) Projects are going in that are in opposition to the stakeholders endorsement. (Lydia Miller) *A discussion followed on the proper public review for the MRRP – CEQA?* The Plan intended as guidance, not policy. Particular projects must undergo CEQA and I believe they have. (Ted Selb) The River is different from top to bottom – some places you may not have the same amount of bank, on the lower end for example. The diversity requires flexibility, not hard and fast rules. (Pat Ferrigno and others) Is the end point to have a functioning river – corridor wider than 50'? (unk) What was the County's role in the MRRP? (unk) It was unique for the County to be involved. The plan wasn't developed as policy. The Mineral Resource Zone policy referenced this MRRP Plan, but it was not used as policy. CEQA review on individual projects references MRRP. No one – not the County, MID, or other agencies are trying to adopt the MRRP as policy. Public review of the Plan was achieved through the MRS. The County will not act as a lead agency for taking the MRRP through CEQA. (Bill Nicholson)

If the document is intended as guidelines not policy, if it's being used as such, we must stop this. (Bernie Wade) How would a CEQA review benefit the Plan? (Dave Hu) The MRS decided to inventory resources and projects on the River and to focus on River education. We need to have a further understanding of the River. At one point, we recommended the focus be broadened to the watershed. We disliked the focus on the gravel reaches. The County should lead on CEQA review if they are using the Plan as they are. The Plan has too much weight without review. Agencies are settling for minimal mitigation based on the MRRP. (Lydia Miller) We had a grant proposal on water monitoring (the Robinson proposal) and UC is doing an extensive study of the watershed. More data is coming in without incorporation into the MRRP. There is a lack of

coordination. Public money is being used on projects – if it deals with public benefits, CEQA could remedy this. Much information is not included in the MRRP, i.e. irrigation input, species integration, etc. There is a lack of information – CEQA would flesh this out. (Joe Mitchell)

NOAA doesn't use the MRRP as policy, but for guidelines and reference only. The MRRP is used as a starting point: i.e., approached by Caltrans for projects on the River and info, they are referred to the MRRP. It's used as a book/reference with many other references, as well. Are there flaws? Yes. But it provides general themes. I suggest the following:

- Add a disclaimer to the first few pages of the MRRP;
- NOAA Fisheries will write a letter outlining our use of the MRRP; and
- There was a review of the Plan – the Adaptive Management Forum. Let's put it on the AFRP Website.

(Madelyn Martinez)

Regarding Santa Fe Aggregates' Bettencourt Project, many studies were done and documents reviewed for this Project and MRRP was one such document. The EIR has references to the MRRP, but the Plan wasn't written in such a way as to be used as policy. All river projects will have to undergo the CEQA process. We are not seeing the MRRP being used as policy. I think we could add on to the MRRP with grants and other projects. (Michelle Cunningham)

The "setbacks" depend on use, i.e. sediment interception. Setbacks differ with the purpose of the project and location. On the size of a riparian buffer, it will be hard to find size agreement. The MRRP is written to use the existing information available at the time. Funding limits the amount of study that can be done. The MRRP is not a project and seems not to require CEQA review. (Pete Downs) There should be a General Plan update. If the MRRP is to be used, CEQA review is appropriate. It may not be written as policy in the County, but it is alluded to as such. (Lydia Miller)

*[Are you saying that]* every referenced scientific paper should have CEQA review? (Jeff McLain) No, as new projects and info come in, they could be added as an addendum. (Lydia Miller) The MRRP was funded by CALFED and AFRP. Environmental review is done - both have programmatic EIRs and EISs with CEQA and NEPA reviews. If any action is proposed, they need separate environmental review. I like the disclaimer proposed for the beginning of the Plan. The Plan doesn't cover everything, that is probably impossible. I don't want the Plan to be misused. (Jeff McLain)

I understood it to review what was happening on the River. There is such diversity along the River – it needs different specific plans for each project. How much studying do we do before a project can go on? (Mike Bettencourt) There is diversity over time, as well. (Pete Downs) We are getting carried off [with our discussions on] this document. We are wasting time if we focus on this. Some use the document for their own use. Meetings should be educational. Stay focused. Take the fight over the document elsewhere and don't waste time. The focus can't look at the whole River – perhaps it can on a current project. If you focus on one reach of the River you will get all landowners and agencies involved to attend and review. This can be done one reach at a time. (Ray Gene Veldhuis)

We are wasting our time on this issue. It is not, and should not, be an issue. The plan is a public document funded with public money, all agencies are able to reference it whether it is their sole basis for a decision or not. While I do not think it is a definitive and exhaustive study, I also do not think it warrants further expenditure of public funds in view of the current state fiscal situation. Additionally, we have a non-river property owner trying to steer the group with something that takes the consent and support of the property owners, something that is fundamentally wrong and inappropriate. (Terry Howard)

I think a disclaimer that the MRRP is to be used as a guidance document is a good idea. I am unsure about the use of the word "policy." It generally means it's written. When the Plan was written, we got something better than was there before. The Plan is evolving based on new information. It would be good to add the Adaptive Management Forum info to the Plan [*referenced in the disclaimer*]. We should cc county governments and land use agencies. (Pat Brantley)

After making a stand on moving up the date of the next Stakeholders Meeting I found I have an unchangeable commitment on May 17<sup>th</sup>. My apologies, particularly to you, Lydia. I know you didn't want the date change. I'm truly sorry that I requested it and can't attend. Because I can't be there, I wanted to send this to a few of you about my position on the use of the Plan.

I strongly agree about the Plan having to be a living document. I don't remember that we had a great deal of debate about the adequacy of the 300 foot minimum riparian corridor recommendation at the time the Plan was being developed. We may well have. If not, I guess we should have. If 300 feet isn't a scientifically sound beginning figure for a set back, it certainly is time to look at the document. Reviewing the document is extremely important. I'm really glad, Lydia, that you have focused our attention on this need. A yearly review would seem to be very appropriate...to look at it in terms of revisions, what progress is being made in restoration and future implementation needs. When we have questions about the scientific basis for recommendations we will need to have a mechanism for improving the science information...including getting funding to do that.

But, on the role of the present plan... I feel very strongly that there is a need to cite current information and recommendations as a guide for land use and restoration decisions. From what I've seen, I believe 300 feet of riparian vegetation ...especially where it can be maintained on both sides of the river...can work as habitat. It certainly will not be adequate in all situations. The Plan at least allows anyone to lobby for greater than 300 feet since it is cited as minimum. In doing so, scientific evidence for the need for an increase should be available to back up the recommendation and give it standing. The document should include information that would support greater than 300 feet in areas where it would be necessary. And maybe it does need stronger data on minimum requirements.

I feel the ideal, which would be complete restoration of what was here before man came and changed the landscape, is unachievable. But is 300 feet not better than 50? Without using the information and recommendation that we have now of the 300 foot minimum, a 50 foot setback from the river was what was being proposed for the Bettencourt project. Proponents did say that the slope of the pond that started at 50 ft. from the river would have been revegetated giving, if I remember correctly, what they felt was 50 feet more of riparian habitat. Now as it stands, I believe they would mine to 200 feet of the river and restore to true

riparian habitat to 300 feet. Where habitat now exists....very little, unfortunately...they would leave to 300 feet. As I remember that would not destroy any existing habitat. I'm not saying this to be in any way supportive of the project, just that it is better than it would have been without using the Plan's guidelines.

I would not sign-on to a statement stating that the Plan should not be used with the existing information as a guide for agencies now. It is all we have and before we make changes we could lose habitat by not citing a document that local policy makers have shown some respect for. I fear that if you take away that respect, the river habitat will be the loser.

I would, however, very willingly sign something acknowledging that the Plan is to be considered a living document. And...that in using the existing recommendations for guidelines, agencies should be aware that the Plan and the recommendations contained in it will change if and when more scientific knowledge is gathered indicating the need for the change in order to meet habitat requirements.

I'm hoping that any final decision will not be ready to be made on this at the May meeting and that I will have a chance for further participation. I'm so sorry that I'll miss out on discussion of what is a really important issue. Again, my apologies to anyone the change in date may have inconvenienced. (Cathy Weber *via email*)

Actions to be taken:

- Add disclaimer to MRRP and cc agencies.
- Lydia Miller, Jeff McLain, Joe Mitchell, Bill Nicholson, Madelyn Martinez, and Mike Bettencourt will work on the wording for a disclaimer and bring it to the next meeting.
- The disclaimer will be a simple document – just several sentences – and will include a statement on addendums.
- The above people will participate in a conference call on June 1<sup>st</sup> at 10:00 am to be set up by Jeff McLain.

The stakeholders requested an educational element be featured at each meeting.

Announcements:

1. The Merced River Fair will be held on Saturday, August 7, in Henderson Park in Snelling. Flyers were available at the meeting.

Possible items for next agenda: Discussion of proposed disclaimer, presentation from Eric Tressler on the newly forming Merced River Foundation, Merced River Ranch (Pete Downs), and the Merced River Fair (Gwen Huff).

Next Meeting: Monday, July 19, 2004, at the UC Cooperative Extension Classroom, 2145 Wardrobe, Merced, CA. Michelle Cunningham will bring snacks and Madelyn Martinez will bring beverages.

For more information, contact Teri Murrison at 209-852-0112 or [info@mercedriverstakeholders.org](mailto:info@mercedriverstakeholders.org).

April 19, 2004

## **Final KEY OUTCOMES MEMORANDUM Merced River Stakeholders Meeting**

This Key document summarizes main discussion points that arose during the meeting, as well as any agreement by the group for action. It was reviewed and approved by the stakeholders at their May 17, 2004 meeting.

The Stakeholder group meeting was held from 6:30 pm – 8:34 pm at the UC Cooperative Extension Classroom Building, 2145 Wardrobe, Merced, CA. Approximately 24 stakeholders attended the meeting, including representatives of the public, landowners, agency, and special interest groups. The attendance sheet will be attached to the Final Key Outcomes Memorandum and placed on file with East Merced Resource Conservation District, 2135 Wardrobe, Merced, CA.

### 1. Updates

Merced Irrigation District Update: (Ted Selb, Merced Irrigation District) Regarding the current status of the Vernalis Adaptive Management Plan (VAMP). VAMP is in its 5<sup>th</sup> year of studying the survival of adult/juvenile salmon on the San Joaquin River (delta area). Tagged juvenile salmon are being released and 3 tributaries (the Merced, Stanislaus, and Tuolumne Rivers) are currently releasing additional water to “flush” the juvenile salmon out to the ocean. The cold pulses of additional water serve to move out lingering juveniles in the tributaries and the San Joaquin. Data is collected by commercial fishermen and reported to the Department of Fish & Game. The Merced’s biggest flow will be approximately 1,300 cubic feet per second (cfs), as measured at Cressey. Combined with pulses from the other tributaries, the goal is for 3,200 cfs at Vernalis. The tributaries have begun to release pulses at different times (first Tuolumne, then Stanislaus, and finally Merced). The Merced began releasing pulses on April 12 and will continue through May 12th. The projected biggest flow will occur between approx., but the maximum pulse will take place on the Merced between May 3<sup>rd</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>.

Additionally, \$ 350,000 in state funding to operate the Department of Fish & Game’s Snelling Merced River Hatchery has been eliminated. MID and others are working to secure alternate funding to support the facility’s ongoing use. He will advise the stakeholders when the effort can utilize help in contacting officials and legislators.

Merced County Planning Update: (Bill Nicholson, Merced County Planning) Regarding current watershed related planning activities. The Santa Fe Aggregates Bettencourt Ranch project was approved and is now under litigation. The Woolstenhulme Mine project was re-approved by the County, but is now also under litigation. There are currently no urban proposals before the Planning Commission.

Watershed Coordinator Interim Funding Update: (Cindy Lashbrook, East Merced RCD) Regarding the award of a Department of Conservation Watershed Coordinator grant to EMRCD that will run from April 2004 – June 2007. Teri Murrison reviewed the goals of the grant (1. continue to facilitate the Merced River Stakeholders and coordinate watershed activities and 2. provide training and support to interested landowners who wish to monitor their own water quality via individual test kits.)

**Action:** The stakeholders agreed to the distribution of these draft key outcomes documents in order to comment and make additions/changes. The group will approve all changes of the previous meeting’s draft key outcomes at the next regularly scheduled meeting.

## 2. Merced River Ranch Revegetation Experiment

(Pete Downs, Stillwater Sciences) Heard an update on progress to date. The Experiment was funded by the Bay Delta Authority (CALFED) to determine what vegetation excels in “very difficult” terrain (gravel tailing piles). Stillwater has established various plots on the Merced River Ranch: grading has been done, irrigation systems are being installed, depressions made in which to plant seedlings, etc. Planting of a variety of seedlings including Cottonwood, Valley Oak, Oregon Ash, and Box Elder is to begin on April 20<sup>th</sup>. The second part of the experiment deals with testing sediments, water, and bio-indicator species (fish & invertebrates) for the presence of mercury. Testing has taken place over the winter and so far, no significant mercury levels have been detected.

## 3. Caltrans Bridge Replacement Project Status

(Dave Mendoza, project manager, and Geoff Gray, staff biologist) Regarding the status of replacing the Hwy 59 bridge (in the vicinity of Youd Road) that was closed as a result of the winter storms of 1997/98 (and later reopened). The project was initiated shortly after high River flows caused scouring that undercut the foundation of the bridge and environmental work completed. Due to a redesign that moved the bridge 20 meters to the east, Caltrans is currently re-doing the previously completed environmental review process. Comments are being accepted on Caltrans’ Mitigated Negative Declaration (*already closed, but unable to get exact date comment period had closed as of today, 05/26/04*). After completion of the environmental review process, Caltrans will begin to purchase right of ways and begin construction in 2005. Completion is anticipated in 2007. Construction will be achieved without closing Hwy 59 to through traffic. Comments: Potential impacts to the expensive Robinson restoration project should be analyzed and avoided. (Gwen Huff and others)

## 4. Discussion of Current Status of the Merced River Restoration Plan

(Zoey Diggory, Stillwater Sciences) Regarding the history of the Merced River Restoration Plan. The Plan was the result of a Calfed grant to Stillwater Sciences to provide a technically sound restoration plan on the lower Merced River that was publicly supported and implementable. The Plan resulted in The Merced River Stakeholders group being formed as a vehicle to incorporate public input and support. The Plan generated 2 study reports, the “Identification of Social, Institutional, and Infrastructural Opportunities & Constraints” (2000, aka the “EDAW Report”) and the “Geomorphic and Riparian Vegetation Investigations Report (2001), as well as the final Merced River Restoration Plan which was based on those studies. Over several years, the stakeholders gave input on goals and objectives, recommended and prioritized goals and objectives, as well as prioritizing the recommended restoration actions.

(Lydia Miller, San Joaquin Raptor Rescue Center) Regarding current usage of the Plan by agencies to establish policy. Lydia stated that agency participants in the Merced River Stakeholders group and others have interpreted the document as policy and are basing land use and other decisions on it. She said that not all stakeholders agreed with all elements of the Plan and that buy-in was less than complete. She noted that agencies are being asked to incorporate the Plan in mitigation/environmental compliance documents. She feels this usage is inappropriate since the Plan did not pass through CEQA/NEPA processes and as such shouldn’t be used to establish policy. She requested that stakeholders consider taking a position on the Plan and its appropriate uses. Inappropriate use of the Plan contributes to impacts to the River.

(Bill Nicholson, Director of Merced County Planning Department) Regarding the County’s use of the Plan in land use zoning. He stated that within the County, in order for the Plan to be used as policy it would have to be added to the General Plan and that this has not been done. Two recent projects’ mitigation plans, the Hardin and Bettencourt projects, were “consistent” with the MRRP.

He stated that the corridor used for the mitigation plans was based on the MRRP and the MRS stakeholder process to preserve riparian vegetation. He stressed that the County's interpretation of "policy" incorporates formal adoption and that different agencies and individuals have varied interpretations of the word.

General Discussion: The following comments/questions were raised (comments are followed by the names of those who made them, where possible).

Even though the county hasn't adopted the use of the Plan as policy, it is being used as policy. (Lydia Miller) Why can't the Plan be used as a guidance document? (Cathy Weber) The Plan was not technically sound enough to serve as guidance due to the fact that its scope was limited, not complete, and the watershed needs further analysis. (Lydia Miller) For a plan to be publicly supported, it needs to undergo environmental review. (Joe Mitchell) The Plan is a good first step and its usage indicates that there is an appetite for the info contained in the Plan. (Glenn Anderson) Agreement that the Plan is a good first step, but more work needs to be done. (Lydia Miller and others) There was discontent with the Plan as it was being developed due to the fact that its focus was too narrow (primarily salmon). (Joe Mitchell) [As project reviewer at NOAA Fisheries,] I use the MRRP as a guiding document to provide baseline data for environmental review processes on Merced River projects. I advise project proponents to read for info, not that the Plan is a part of NOAA Fisheries policy. (Madelyn Martinez) [In my job at USFWS,] I use the Plan to set minimum criteria (such as minimum setbacks – Plan based on RHJV setbacks). The USFWS has no setback criteria and in fact, there was a ridge of gravel within the setback area on the Hardin project that should have been removed for the River to have been able to move out into the flood plain. (Jeff McLain)

The Plan was "cooked" from the top down with fish-interests driving the process. (Ezio Sansoni and Lydia Miller) Further discussion followed on whether the Plan was originated by Calfed or the AFRP Program, the general process, and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). (various stakeholders) Planning wasn't inclusive of the MRS. Everything went to the TAC first before getting passed by the stakeholders. (Joe Mitchell) During the Bettencourt environmental review process, Santa Fe Aggregates asked their consultant to review and incorporate the MRRP and the project mitigation plan was revised to be more consistent with the MRRP. The Plan has a lot of reference information for the River. (Michelle Langmaid Cunningham) The MRRP is one of many documents used in the mitigation planning CEQA process. Mitigation is motivated beyond initial review using or referencing the Plan. The Plan was used as a guide for one part of the review process. The County didn't come up with a plan for the MRRP. Santa Fe Aggregates' Plan was already written. (Bill Nicholson) The County stepped up and took the lead on the stakeholder process and shouldn't be "bashed" for doing that. (Ted Selb)

The process originated with the AFRP, then Calfed funded it. (Jeff McLain) The MRS was not informed of the Robinson Reach restoration and other projects. Projects are not coming from the group – they are still coming from agencies. (Ezio Sansoni) There is work happening that hasn't been reviewed by the group. (unknown) The Plan should be seen as a living document. (Glenn Anderson) What do we want to accomplish in the future? (unknown) We haven't addressed Lydia's comments and request for action. Should we have a resolution from this group? (Ted Selb) I am not asking for the Merced River Stakeholders to make a resolution, but for individuals in the group to investigate uses of the Plan. (Lydia Miller) Rhonda Reed was a part of a lot of projects. Her information is missing. What is the history of the Robinson project? (Bernie Wade) I can provide information on the history of the AFRP Program on the Merced River. (Jeff McLain) Potential resolutions should be brought to the next meeting so we can evaluate them. (Cindy Lashbrook)

**Action:** The next MRS meeting will continue the discussion on the MRRP and other regular housekeeping items only.

- What is the history of planning and project efforts by AFRP? (Jeff McLain, 10 mins)
- How has the MRRP been used to date?
- Should and can the existing MRRP be revised? Should we create a more comprehensive Plan? If so, how should that be done (funding, etc.)?

Announcements:

1. Merced Union High School District's watershed efforts are continuing successfully. Students will present the 5<sup>th</sup> annual Valley Voices & Friends Multicultural & Multilingual Poetry Festival on Friday, April 30, 2004 from 7-9 pm at the Merced Multicultural Arts Center. Teachers Ocean Jones and Lorri McLaughlin submitted and were among of a handful of nationally funded projects by the Toyota Tapestry Grant Program. Receipt of this grant will help maintain their extracurricular watershed science and literature programs and increase students' access to and appreciation of the watershed. (Ocean Jones).
2. The 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Merced River Fair will be held in Snelling at Henderson Park on August 7<sup>th</sup>. The EMRCD will be participating and providing information on watershed efforts including the MRS. Cathy Weber and Sally Magneson have volunteered to help Teri Murrison put together a display. Anyone interested in helping, please contact Cathy, Sally, or Teri. (Gwen Huff, CAFF)

Next Meeting: Monday, May 17, 2004, at the UC Cooperative Extension Classroom, 2145 Wardrobe, Merced, CA. Bernie Wade will bring snacks and Teri Murrison will bring beverages.

For more information, contact Teri Murrison at 209-852-0112 or [info@mercedriverstakeholders.org](mailto:info@mercedriverstakeholders.org).

February 23, 2004

## **Draft KEY OUTCOMES MEMORANDUM** **Merced River Stakeholders Meeting**

The Stakeholder group meeting was held at the Tri-College Center, Tri-College Center Drive, Merced, CA. Approximately 26 stakeholders attended the meeting, including representatives of the public, landowners, agency, and special interest groups. The attendance sheet will be attached to the Key Outcomes Memorandum and placed on file with East Merced Resource Conservation District, 2135 Wardrobe, Merced, CA.

Meeting outcomes included:

Merced Irrigation District Update: Update provided by Ted Selb

Merced County Planning Update: none given

Watershed Coordinator Interim Funding Update: No decision has been announced by the Department of Conservation regarding the East Merced RCD's grant application for a watershed coordinator position. Announcements should be made prior to the next meeting and another update will be given at the next meeting.

Merced River Ranch Project Update, A Negative Declaration has been prepared and a notice (and the Negative Declaration are posted on the MRS Website). Go to "[What's New?](#)" page to read the documents. Pete Downs, Stillwater Sciences

### Announcements:

1. A proposed rule defining critical habitat for Central Valley Chinook and Steelhead will be issued by the end of June. It is possible that the Central Valley Steelhead will be re-listed as endangered (currently threatened). There will be a 30-day comment period and the MRS will be kept apprised of new developments. (Madelyn Martinez, NOAA)
2. An Alternate Weed Management field day will be held at Living Farms. Cindy Lashbrook will provide a flyer for posting on the MRS Website.
3. The Upper Merced River will hold its annual Watershed Day on April 5th. There will be a wide variety of events celebrating the River. Nancy McConnell will provide a flyer for posting on the MRS Website.
4. The USFWS is currently promoting its Partners for Wildlife Program, cost-sharing for wetlands restoration activities that benefit wildlife. Projects will go up to \$25,000 (cost-sharing with landowners). NRCS is also involved in this program. For more information, contact Shawn Mylar, USFWS at 209-826-3508.

Next Meeting: Monday, April 19, 2003. The present location is not adequate in size. Teri will book another location. Cathy Weber will bring snacks and Gwen Huff will bring beverages.

Tentative agenda items are:

- New Zealand Mud Snails, (Roger Buttermore, USFWS)
- UC, Merced grant proposal: "Planning a Sensor Network to Monitor, Manage, and Forecast a CLEANER California Watershed," (Tom Harmon, UC Merced);
- Watershed Coordinator funding and Prop 13 Grant Application Update:

- Discussion of current status of Merced River Restoration Plan;
- Merced River Ranch Revegetation Experiment (Pete Downs);

For more information, contact Teri Murrison at 209-852-0112 or [info@mercedriverstakeholders.org](mailto:info@mercedriverstakeholders.org).

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