

Merced River Stakeholders Meeting Minutes January 15, 2007

The Merced River Stakeholders meeting was held from 6:00-8:30pm at the Merced Tri-College Center Merced, CA. Approximately 21 stakeholders were in attendance, including representatives from the public, landowners, agencies and others. The Final Meeting Minutes and attendance sheet will be placed on file with the East Merced Resource Conservation District.

Minutes from November Meeting

Minutes from November 2006 meeting approved with the following corrections;

Merced County Planning Department Jeff Wilson

Harden #1/Black Diamond – proposal went before the planning commission November 1. Commission recommended general plan amendment, zone change modification and approval of the mitigated negative declaration to the Board of Supervisors. BOS will vote Dec 12th.

Results of Water Quality Testing in the Lower Merced River *Parry Klassen*

Approximately one half of the acreage in the coalition area is signed up with the coalition as of December 1st. However, that does not include, what is expected to be, a large influx of growers signing up before the deadline.

Prices to landowners have gone up as constituents to be monitored have increased. Monitoring objective is to characterize discharge and identify problems. Then plans to manage any problems must be developed. A management plan results in increased monitoring frequency and outreach to landowners on management practices.

19 of 21 sites are teetering on need of management plans because of exceedances. The Westside of the valley is having multiple exceedances of pesticides in the water column.

Existing Management Plans – on the verge of increasing number of waterways to come under plans

- 1 Duck Slough @ Pioneer Rd and at Gurr Rd
- 2 Highline canal @ Hwy 99
- 3 Merced River @ Santa Fe
- 4 Ash Slough @ Ave 21

The Merced River management plan is underway. However, the cause of the toxicity found has not been able to be determined, which poses a challenge for managing the toxicity. However, Chlorpyrifos exceedances must be managed by the coalition within two year. Certain landowners have received surveys on use of best management practices.

Special Studies

E coli source identification – determined to be human, not agricultural

Pyrethroids – registrants to perform analysis on sites with sediment toxicity to determine the cause.

- Chlorpyrifos is the most common cause of exceedances. Timing of detection may indicate alfalfa applications.
- Pyrethroids are found in sediment toxicity
- Copper is a common exceedance and is used as a fungicide.

The coalition has planned meetings for sub watersheds in February. For more information on the coalition, please visit their website at <http://www.esjcoalition.org>

Black Diamond Gravel Mining Project and Ingalsbe Slough *Jeff Wilson*

- Black Diamond Project – Approved Dec 2006
- Bernard Wade – initial study anticipated in early Spring.
- M Birmingham – waiting for consultant
- Santa Fe Aggregates – South of Snelling, waiting for consultants

Black Diamond Project

Board of supervisors approved zone change and modification to mine below grade

The water level is equal to that of Ingalsbe Slough and there is a required 20 foot set back from the slough.

Revised condition (#3) – Mining to occur in six phases

Hydrologist to monitor water in Ingalsbe Slough for water quality and quantity. 30 day response from Black Diamond required if problem with either water quality or quantity found. If called by landowner downstream with complaint of such, County will immediately go to site and determine the problem.

Traffic issues coordinated in order not to impact school traffic.

Q&A

What is the standard setback from a waterway?

JW – I am not sure. I will get back to you on that.

How is hydrologist chosen?

JW Black Diamond had their own hydrologist approved by County peer review

Why not an EIR?

JW – Public agencies didn't require it. Mitigation brought it down to less than significant impact.

Thirty day response time is too long for farmers in the summer.

JW – If a problem is identified by down stream landowners, County (Jeff Wilson) will go out immediately.

Can monitoring and complaint reports be made public?

JW – Yes, but only by requests through Freedom of Information Act

When will annual inspections and reports be available?

JW- April-May, with a public information request these will be made available.

Merced River Ranch *Pete Downs*

This will be an “End of Project” summary

This project has been for planning only – to remove dredger tailings and restore the area. As yet there are no funds to implement this plan.

Gross scale studies on dredger tailings reach (DTR) were a pilot for the Merced River Ranch (MRR)

Proposed

- Removal of gravel
- reduction of the width and depth of the river,
- creation of secondary water courses for diversity of habitat

- preserve wetlands, leaving existing habitat in place.

Many technical reports were written

- Revegetation study
- Mercury levels
- Groundwater
- Others

To get the full reports, visit the Stillwater website at <http://merced.stillwatersci.com>

New Fish Counts on the Merced River *Ryan Cuthbert, Fish Sciences*

This work samples the out migrating juvenile salmon in the Merced River. This work had been done up until 2002 at Hageman Park, when it was discontinued. In 2007 it was revived downstream of Hageman Park, closer to the confluence with the San Joaquin River.

Upstream of this sampling, additional sampling is being conducted by MID at Hopeton. It would be desirable to compare data from both of these traps in order to determine how many fish make it from the hatchery to the confluence.

A lot of this work is being done on the Stanislaus river and the trend is that a large number of fish are caught in the upper trap, but very few at the bottom trap. This is especially true in low flow years.

Salmon fry emerge January through March and smolts can be found later in the spring.

Monthly email updates on trapping results will be sent out.

Announcements

David Hu, USFWS, announced that he is replacing Carl Mesick, USFWS on their agency's work on the Merced River. Carl has been assigned to work on the San Joaquin River.

Next Meeting

Next meeting to take place March 19th.

Jim Genes volunteered to bring snacks and the Dragovich/Bettencourt families will provide drinks.