



California Advisory Committee On Salmon and Steelhead Trout

November 18, 2013

Charlton H. Bonham, Director
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
1416 Ninth St., 12th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Support for full implementation of Watershed Component of Trinity River Record of Decision

Dear Mr. Bonham,

The California Advisory Committee on Salmon and Steelhead (CAC) recommends that the Department, through its participation in the Trinity Management Council, support full implementation of the Watershed Restoration portion of the 2000 Trinity River Record of Decision (Trinity ROD) and expand efforts into tributary restoration.

The Trinity River Record of Decision calls for implementation of an upslope watershed restoration program approximating \$1.8 million/year (using year 2000 dollars) throughout the Trinity River Basin as follows:

“The Trinity Management Council will guide an upslope watershed restoration program to address the problems of excessive sediment input from many of the tributaries of the Trinity River resulting from land use practices. The watershed protection program of the Preferred Alternative includes road maintenance, road rehabilitation and road decommissioning on private and public lands within the Trinity River basin below Lewiston Dam, including the South Fork Trinity River basin.” (Trinity ROD page 14)

However, the Bureau of Reclamation has arbitrarily limited expenditure of Trinity River Restoration Program (TRRP) funds only to watersheds from Lewiston Dam to the North Fork confluence. As a result, TRRP watershed restoration funding is \$500,000 in a good year. Reclamation has not provided any written documentation for this decision. This bias against watershed restoration goes back to 1993 when the late Byron Leydecker shut down the mainstem restoration program and millions

went into the South Fork and other tributaries for numerous successful watershed and tributary restoration projects.

More recently, Reclamation's bias against watershed restoration resulted in the exclusion of the only three local Trinity County watershed restoration partners from Trinity River Restoration Program watershed and design team work groups (Trinity County RCD, Five Counties Salmonid Restoration Program and the Hayfork Watershed Research and Training Center). This was after the federal Advisory Committee, the Trinity Adaptive Management Working Group, was assured in writing that such a thing would not occur.

Furthermore, the Trinity River Restoration Program's (TRRP) Science Advisory Board has determined that mainstem Trinity River Restoration projects, costing millions each year for the past decade, are only increasing juvenile salmonid habitat by 1% to 1.5% a year at base flows. The goal is a minimum 400% increase, yet these mainstem projects are over halfway completed. Habitat creation has not been achieved and TRRP fishery restoration goals are consistently not being met.

Based on the poor habitat creation results and Reclamation's bias against watershed and tributary restoration, the TRRP will never meet its restoration goals. The Advisory Committee therefore encourages the Department of Fish and Wildlife, through its position as a co-member of the Trinity Management Council to support the following:

1. Reinstate the local watershed restoration entities to full membership in Trinity River Restoration Program work groups, especially the Watershed Work Group.
2. Support full implementation of the Watershed Restoration in the Trinity ROD. The Department should scientifically refute Reclamation's conclusions that construction and operation of the Trinity River Division of the Central Valley Project has no causal linkage to watershed and fishery conditions in tributaries below the confluence of the North Fork Trinity River and the mainstem Trinity River.
3. Support efforts to include tributary restoration as a "new" method of achieving juvenile salmonid habitat to meet TRRP fishery restoration goals.

The Trinity River is the largest Tributary of the Klamath River and is an important component in California's salmon and steelhead fisheries. The TRRP has an annual budget of approximately \$15 million/year. Surely more of that could be spent on the type of projects that are known to increase salmonid production--fine sediment reduction, fish passage, water conservation, screening of diversions and tributary habitat creation. It is unconscionable that so little is being spent on cost effective projects and so much is being spent on the mainstem for so little gain.

We therefore ask that the Department, through its participation in the Trinity Management Council, support full implementation of the Watershed Restoration portion of the 2000 Trinity ROD and expand efforts into tributary restoration.

We thank you for your consideration of these points and look forward to hearing back from you on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vivian Helliwell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Vivian Helliwell, Chair CAC
vhelliwell@mcn.org

cc: Honorable Wesley Chesbro, Chairman Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture