



Central Coast Integrated Watershed Restoration Program (IWRP)

~Building an Integrated Conservation Program ~

Karen Christensen, RCD of Santa Cruz Co
Jim Robins, *Alnus* Ecological

The Future Of Natural Resource Management In California

October 6, 2010

IWRP Context

- Lack of forum to discuss countywide watershed restoration priorities (11 watershed plans +TMDL's, recovery plans, etc)
- Lack of a cohesive or integrated approach to tackling conservation
- Overlapping efforts between partners, while other needs go unmet
- Limited funding sources for designs and permits
- No centralized oversight to ensure consistent, high-quality designs
- Lack of early agency feedback often leading to expensive re-design
- Confusing and time-consuming permit application process
- Shrinking agency and local partner staff time and funding

Creation of IWRP

Local Players Ask, "How can we..."

- (a) begin to prioritize and integrate efforts within and across watersheds to implement existing recommendations?
- (b) obtain funds for feasibility analyses, designs and permits for high priority project?
- (c) ensure the highest quality of designs and expedite permitting?
- (d) effectively use resource agency staff skills and abilities (ownership vs overwhelm)?

.....the creation of Santa Cruz Co. IWRP

IWRP Goal

**Use Collaborative and Integrated
Approach with Diverse Partners to Address
WATERSHED HEALTH
from Headwaters to Lagoons**

IWRP Points of INTEGRATION



Human Components of the IWRP Process

- IWRP Steering Team
 - IWRP Program Coordinator- **State Coastal Conservancy**
 - IWRP Local Hub- **RCD**
 - IWRP Coordinator (**single point of contact- Alnus**)
- **Inter-agency TAC**
 - Local (ex. County Planning), State (ex. DFG, RWQCB, CC), and Federal (ex. NOAA, FWS, USACE, NRCS) resource agencies
- **Project Proponents**
 - Private Landowners; NGO's (ex. WWW); RCD; Local Municipalities (ex. DPW); Land Trust; State Agencies (ex. State Parks); Federal Agencies (ex. BLM), etc

TAC as Central to Success From Prioritization to Implementation

- Collaboratively develop project prioritization and selection process
- Create sense of ownership from TAC members for the process and projects
- Cross-pollination between TAC members (ex. Salmonid PBO)
- Engage TAC from project inception through implementation
- Maintain respect for time and commitment of TAC members

Major Successes To-Date

- ~90 IWRP projects currently scheduled for implementation by the end of 2011 (80 already in the ground).
- * Creation of the first **Countywide** Permit Coordination Program
- ~\$12M **leveraged** in grants to Santa Cruz County RCD and Partners to via Prop 40, Prop 50, DFG, NOAA-RC, NRCS, AR, TNC, and private foundations to implement IWRP projects
- *Partner with NMFS and NOAA RC on creation of **Programmatic Biological Opinion** to cover Salmonid Restoration Projects
- ***Introduction** of IWRP Model to San Mateo and Monterey Counties

Foundational Components of the IWRP Process

- Building **trust** between and among TAC, Steering Team and project proponents
- Developing sense of **ownership** for the Program across political boundaries
- **Balancing** missions of varied stakeholders (infrastructure and natural resources or fish and water quality)
- **Leveraging** capacity across diverse local stakeholders and working toward efficiency (i.e. IWRP as the hub for support on technical, regulatory, or funding issues related to conservation projects).

IWRP Lessons Learned

#1- You need a strong and effective steering team or local lead to:

- 1) Bring skills, trust, and comfort to project proponents and TAC members
- 2) Keep the program focused on the resources... eyes on the prize
- 3) Bring in new partners (private and public landowners, local agencies, etc)
- 4) Troubleshoot and overcome the many obstacles that will be encountered
- 5) Maintain and "grow" integration

IWRP Lessons Learned



Source: Edelman

#2- It takes patience and commitment to the long-term to build a successful program...the snowball effect is REAL.

IWRP Lessons Learned:



#3- Face time with the TAC is critical...the best cross-pollination and discussion happens in person and in the field. Regular and open dialogue with TAC keeps the Program alive and relevant

IWRP Lessons Learned:



#4- Funding through FLEXIBLE block grants is key to allowing the program to be dynamic and take advantage of resource priority opportunities as they develop...allows the program to be pragmatic and nimble

IWRP Lessons Learned:



We have the decision-making at our board meetings down to a science.

#5- Avoid too much process and too little action...sometimes you just have to move forward and start doing stuff

Recommendations- Programmatic

- **Rethink how resource agency staff approach conservation**
 - empower agency staff to be engaged and proactive vs. isolated and reactive (instead of focus on avoiding impacts, refocus on making conservation happen)
 - Work to promote FACE TIME on projects and in programs from the onset (time up front is time saved reacting to permit applications)
- **Rethink resource funding programs**
 - Focus on building PROGRAMS not just projects
 - Focus on longer-term block grants or pooled funds to allow local capacity to develop, integration to evolve, and funding to be flexible and adaptive

Recommendations- Programmatic

- Support innovative funding sources to keep programs alive over the long-term (aside from grants)
 - Link mitigation dollars (esp State infrastructure projects) to funding projects identified through successful integrated restoration programs (**state mitigation monies used to fund state conservation priorities; win-win**)
 - Jump start statewide discussion of Ecosystem Services (carbon, water quality, habitat, etc) as another funding source for integrated resource management

Recommendations-Regulatory

Simplify permitting for conservation projects...

#1 Need to develop new INTEGRATED regulatory strategy to help both expedite permitting and provide guidance for beneficial projects.

– Some models already exists to build-on....

- DFG Fisheries Restoration Grant Program's Regional General Permit

- Covers CEQA, 404/401, ESA Section 7, **but not DFG permits**

- Helps projects funded under this program, but not other projects

- Joint Aquatic Resource Permit Application (Bay Area & Washington State)

- Reduces paperwork and redundancy

- fosters an "integrated" approach to compliance

Recommendations-Regulatory

Simplify permitting for conservation projects...

#2 Clarify CEQA exemption §15333 for Small Restoration Projects

- (a) There would be **no significant adverse impact on endangered, rare or threatened species or their habitat** pursuant to section 15065,
- (d) Examples of small restoration projects may include, but are not limited to:
 - (1) revegetation of disturbed areas with native plant species;
 - (2) wetland restoration, the primary purpose of which is to improve conditions for waterfowl or other species that rely on wetland habitat;
 - (3) stream or river bank revegetation, the primary purpose of which is to improve habitat for amphibians or native fish;
 - (4) projects to restore or enhance habitat that are carried out principally with hand labor and not mechanized equipment.**
 - (5) stream or river bank stabilization with native vegetation or other bioengineering techniques, the primary purpose of which is to reduce or eliminate erosion and sedimentation; and
 - (6) culvert replacement conducted in accordance with published guidelines of the Department of Fish and Game or NOAA Fisheries, the primary purpose of which is to improve habitat or reduce sedimentation.

Recommendations-Regulatory

Simplify permitting for conservation projects...

#3 **Build-on** CEQA exemption §15333 for Small Restoration Projects

- SWRCB is has good (and relatively easy) model for developing a parallel streamlined permit process of projects covered under CEQA Cat Ex §15333 (i.e. General 401 Certification developed with the Corps- greatly reduces cost and complexity of permitting)
- Coastal Commission and DFG should adopt similar parallel streamlining process for these types of projects . Cost of acquiring a CDP or SAA can be incredibly high and the process can be very time consuming and intimidating for many folks

