PACIFIC COAST FEDERATION of FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS

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Sent via Electronic Mail to: AB1492Program.Comments@Resources.ca.gov

Dr. Russell K. Henly
Assistant Secretary of Forest Resources Management
California Natural Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: PCFFA/ IFR Comments regarding "Forest Planning Watershed Pilot Projects Concept Paper, REVISED Public Review Draft, Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration Program"

Dear Dr. Henly:

The PCFFA is the largest organization of small-boat, commercial fishing family businesses on the West Coast. Institute for Fisheries Resources (IFR) is the non-profit affiliated with PCFFA for habitat and watershed work. Our members depend on clean, cold rivers and estuaries of the state for spawning and rearing the salmon and crabs we bring to market. We have participated in the TMDL process from the beginning and attempts to implement them, including agricultural waivers; served on the Coho Recovery Planning Team; and recently made comments to the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board on the US Forest Service Waiver and the Cannabis Waiver standards of evaluation (see NCRWCB website for hearings August 12-13 and October 8, 2015.)

"Pilot Project Working Group, Membership." As we stated in oral comments at the December 15, 2015, meeting in Ukiah, we request that the PPWG include additional categories to represent commercial and sport fishing. Both have substantial economic and cultural

interests in all the watersheds of the North Coast Region that supply the spawning and rearing habitat critical to our fish stocks to survive and reproduce. Lack of fishermen is a glaring absence on the draft list. We also recommend having two county representatives from each county that the Pilot Project is in: a Planning Commissioner and a Planner, as they have some jurisdiction over activities on private TPZ land covered in the County General Plans.

Regarding the TRFR Program Advisory Committee, fishing representatives need to be on it as well.

Does the State Water Board Forest Activities Program Manager double as a CalEPA representative in the Program Leadership Team? Water quality and quantity are key in measuring ecosystem performance.

One of our main concerns is that the PPWG representative selection process needs to be transparent. A process for choosing representatives needs to be designed and vetted by the public ASAP.

The voting process of the Pilot Project Working Group (PPWG) should be as follows: 1) Try for consensus 2) If consensus cannot be reached, take a break and revisit the vote after an opportunity for people to digest their ideas some more, and 3) If consensus is still not reached, go with a 2/3 vote, decided at the beginning, listing dissenting votes and dissenting comments if needed. This method worked well in the Coho Recovery Team process, a truncated, mediated approach.

We agree that the PPWG should be involved in field trips to "ground truth preliminary office results" and identify data gaps.

General comment: The document would be easier to read and understand if numbered phrases or bullets were used consistently in long lists, such as pg. 6, (numbers added): "The pilot projects will focus on specific information necessary for 1) evaluating cumulative impacts, 2) developing and recommending standardized requirements for the information, 3) ensuring the information is developed at relevant spatial scales…, and 4) exploring ways to provide electronic public access…."

Pg.5, "Reporting on these accomplishments ["how spatial databases can track…restoration activities…] on an annual basis would be valuable to the agencies, Foard of Forestry and Fire Protection, and the public." Who reports?

Pg. 5, par.1. Yes, we are in favor of "standardized data symbols…for mapping spatial features." "This standardization could create efficiency for both harvesting plan preparers ad reviewers," and we would add: and restoration practitioners.

Under "The specific substantive areas to be addressed by the pilot projects include:" (pg 1, par 2, bullet 2),

- "Identification of information and methods used for cumulative environmental impacts assessment," the following questions need to be asked:

    1. What are the current conditions?
    2. How did it get like this?
    3. Why? What were rationales of human intervention?
    4. When? Historic pattern, past, present, future potential
    5. Who is affected?
    6. Who needs to fix it?

*The program context should include the standard of evaluation of ecosystem function, which is the basis of the economic system, and how it fits into the North Coast Basin Plan pursuant to the Clean Water Act.

Here is a quote about planning restoration on spatial scales from USFS (Regional Water Quality Board) Waiver, Order No. R1-2015-0021:

"10. National Forest Service lands are managed according to USFS Guidance, which is applies through a nesting or hierarchy of spatial scales (e.g. nationally, regionally, provinces, forest, district, watershed, site). Forest Service Manuals provide national direction for NFS lands. Forest Service Handbooks (FSH) provide regional policy direction. The WNWFP provides overall guidance on a multiple-forest scale. LRMPs are developed for each National Forest. Individual National Forests use the Watershed Condition Framework (WCF) to guide watershed assessment and restoration on a watershed scale…. The assessments developed for each watershed are used to identify priority watersheds and develop watershed restoration plans that guide restoration activities within each priority watershed. In this way, the approach to addressing potential impacts from USFS activities and project including water quality, in the broader multiple-region guidance is consistent with the guidance established for each National Forest, watershed, and specific site, with projects at the site-scale being responsive to watershed needs and consistent with the North West Forest Plan and Long Range Management Plans."

This parallels the Clean Water Act hierarchy, the State and Regional Water Board's Basin Plan Goals and Objectives.

The stakeholders and public need to be fully engaged in "The TRFR Program's development of the ecological performance measures for evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of forest-related regulatory programs in reaching their environmental goals" And in evaluating "the effectiveness of the Forest Practice Rules"—to do what? – to protect, restore and enhance ecological functions.

"Proposed Critical Questions." Under bullet 1., pg 3, additional critical questions for pilot projects:

1. "What criteria and methos=ds can be employed, at the planning watershed scale, to identify

a) What are current conditions?
b) What are historic conditions?
c) What are the future desired conditions? Describe environmental goals.

Additional sources of information besides THPs include USGS quad maps, Timber Sale EA's in mixed ownership watersheds. The Forest Service has "Change Scene" GIS overlays for some areas, as in Six Rivers NF, that go back many years.

Under bullet 5., pg 4: We need mixed ownership watersheds, such as Beaver Creek in the Klamath, in the Pilot Project program to see how we can standardize data from varying sources.

"Identification of Restoration Opportunities." We agree that "As with cumulative impact assessment, effective restoration planning benefits from following an explicit process that focuses on the causes rather than the symptoms of resource degradation (Beechie and Bolton, 1999;Beechie et al., 2008)." --This is a key concept. We want the focus to include fire ignition, spread and control, and subsequent erosion in the wet season. Eliminate the expression "stale data," as historic forestry practices and events on the landscape back as far as the inception of the FPA and the FPR in 1971 are contributing to current conditions. A historic perspective is critical to diagnose current conditions and their man-made and natural causes. The Pilot Projects should help inform how to avoid practices that are harmful to "the beneficial uses," including aquatic and terrestrial wildlife, and also future quality timber products. A retrospective is needed to learn from mistakes and successes—what works, what didn't.

Forest practice rule effectiveness: what are the effects that we are trying to prevent? To produce desired future conditions in terms of functionality and stability, secure and supply the beneficial uses.

Selection of the Initial Planning Watershed Pilot

Level of interest and presence of listed species on forest lands.

As criteria for selecting pilot watersheds, "Watershed with more THP frequency provide more information and better picture of current conditions"—as well as potential future impacts. Additionally, mixed ownerships give us more than just THP data. We endorse the planning watershed attributes listed on the last paragraph of page 8:

1. "The rate and area of timber harvest in a planning watershed" (plus area per harvest, rate of entry)
2. "The silvicultural methods used for those entries
3. "The amount and complexity of available scientific data
4. "The amount of available imagery, and
5. "The occurrence of threatened and endangered species"

The following are our four choices for Pilot Watersheds. All have endangered species.

- Usal Creek would be our choice for an initial Pilot Watershed. It satisfies many of the criteria, and has public interest and easy landowner permission for access.
- Big River, Two Log Creek, has a largest landscape of the ten on the list, the most private and mixed ownerships, largest number of THP acres approved, more than just THP data, different silvicultural methods.
- Elk River has strong public interest, much data, multiple ownership, and Headwaters Forest that could be used as a control area. We agree with Greg Giusti that Elk River would be a good candidate.
- Beaver Creek, tributary to the Klamath River. It has mixed ownership of US Forest Service and private timber and numerous repeated entries. Moreover, there is strong public interest concerning fire damage and Klamath National Forest proposed salvage logging. There are solid connections to water quality issues and beneficial uses. Mixed ownerships with public lands and private industrial timberlands contribute to legacy and cumulative effects to riparian function through overlapping jurisdiction on the same watershed. For example, the Klamath NF has recently expressed concern that "The Beaver Creek watershed has a large portion of private industrial timberlands that are managed under the California Forest Practice Rules, which has included harvest within [Riparian Reserves]. " (FEIS H-H-23)

A friendly amendment to the final statement on page 12, "While development of ecological performance measures is not an s explicit component of the pilot project, we anticipate that what we learn from the pilot project will help the Ecological Performance Measures Working Group in their work." We think it should be a component, and would like fishermen representation on it as well.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Vivian Helliwell,

Watershed Conservation Director, PCFFA and IFR