

CA Statewide Environmental Flows Workgroup
A Workgroup of the California Water Quality Monitoring Council

MEETING NOTES – February 27, 2018

Meeting Participants

Name	Agency	email	27-Feb
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General Discussion

Objectives expressed by the group in intros: Common approaches to science, making stronger links between flow change and ecological response, sharing data and tools, improved agency coordination, development/focus on products to help implementation of various agency policies.

Discussion on workgroup mission, set of objectives

- Important elements – advancing the science as well as management applications
- Are we looking at balancing natural resource needs with human uses in this group? Our job is to provide a set of tools that can be used to make decisions, but not to make the decision. We want to develop some consensus around the tools and the applications and promote coordination among the agency partners.
- Concern that water districts and other water use agencies aren't involved. Where do we have discussions about consumption? We can have the discussion later about who should be invited to this group, should we open it up to local agencies and water users? Or a subgroup that deals with specific issues (such as water recycling versus instream flows) and comes back to this group?
 - After extensive discussion there was general agreement that we would like to keep the group as open an inclusive as possible, while still allowing it to function efficiently
- The mission of the group is appropriate, but we will likely have challenges and conflict in the implementation of the mission.
- How do we understand the difference between the technical group advancing the science and the workgroup implementing science and tools? The longer mission statement addresses this issue.

CEFF framework overview

- Differences between ecological flows and environmental flows – when do you consider water availability? And what does that term mean versus water supply? This needs to be clarified on our presentations and fact sheets
- Lots of discussion about terms. We need to put together a glossary and the context of each term. Necessary for this group, but could also help move toward common usage of terms across agencies.

Two-tiered approach and Tier 1 discussion

- Discussion that Tier 1 is intended to provide comprehensive, but coarse level initial ecological flow criteria

- May be sufficient in some cases, but in many cases Tier 2 would be desired
- We will need to have a lot of discussion about where and when tier 2 is needed. “where necessary” is probably different for different agencies and water users.
- We might want to relate functional flow metrics back to more commonly used metrics, such as bankfull flow or other channel metrics used in common eflow methods.
 - Test/evaluate functional flow calculator at specific locations where this is local knowledge. Based on an instantaneous measure of flow (during a routine survey) we could determine if the stream is within or outside its functional flow ranges
- Make sure we preserve water year type differences in our analysis. Could assess by looking at designated past water types (how do metrics change for wet vs dry designations) as well as how percentiles relate to water type (does the 10th percentile magnitude flow only occur in wet years?)
- Concern that the stream classes may not adequately describe hydrologic diversity of streams in Southern California (e.g., LA River and Ventura River). For example, do stream types with a groundwater component overlie a small or large groundwater basin or can be considered gaining or losing reaches? – there was discussion that the stream types are just a starting point for coarse scale and can be refined by more local analysis
 - Pending geomorphic analysis should help with this
- Request for links to the statewide classification map
 - <https://data.ca.gov/dataset/flow-targets-southern-california-streams/resource/aab1c051-842c-46af-a06f-e09d61bd50dc>
 - It is also being incorporated with bioassessment data via the healthy watersheds portal
 - http://www.mywaterquality.ca.gov/eco_health/streams/condition/bugs_bio.html
 - <https://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=31ff89c58aeb440ea63e51afc646cffe&extent=-130.8686,29.2201,-109.3354,44.0172>

Tier 2 discussion

- Method selection and guidance – does this already exist through the Instream Flow Council (Annear et al.)? Don’t want to reinvent the wheel. Maybe we refine this information for California? And supplement with case studies – examine places where these methods have been applied in CA and lessons learned.
- Make it clear that we’re only looking to compile all data and knowledge in a specific place
 - Solicit case studies and demonstrations to see how well the framework works on the ground in real situations
- Consider the connectivity of stream reaches under the data characterization step – key for anadromous fish
- Tier 2 framework – incorporate stream restoration. Restoration + flows results in a very different endpoint than flow alone. – also need to consider groundwater/surface water interactions
 - Julie may present on this at a future meeting

- National Forests (USFS, Amy) – really likes the 2-tiered approach, can really see the utility of tier 1 products for planning and then moving to tier 2 for specific projects and locations.
- CDFW also supportive of tier 1 as a great place to start. They often get calls from various folks asking where to start.
- Question regarding a need for implementation guidelines for Tier 1 flow recommendations from the statewide level? SWRCB (Dan) says no for water rights – implementation needs to be at the regional or local level as regional boards can decide to implement their own flow recommendations.

Workgroup charter and organization

- Should we be reaching out to other entities? Who should we could recruit?
 - Hoopa (Trinity flows). Is there a statewide tribal group? (Yes – tribal advisory committee). We'll do some outreach.
 - **Action Item** – Nick M. and Bryan M. to reach out for tribal representations
 - Regional groups could be involved in case studies – ask for data, give presentations on their efforts to the workgroup. Collaborate on testing and refining tools
 - Set up a workshop for interested parties. Maybe at CalNeva AFS?
 - Workgroups are typically publicly announced through lyrics, but this group should also engage outside parties as needed.
 - **Action Item** – Nick to establish a lyrics list
 - Should think about a structure where we can add subcommittees for specific products or needs
 - Other agencies – perhaps the State Coastal Conservancy or the Corps of Engineers
 - **Action Item** – Eric to contact the Coastal Conservancy re: their interest in participating
 - Regional Boards – reach out to basin planning groups, or the statewide basin planning roundtable
 - **Action Item** – Nick to facilitate a presentation to the Basin Planning roundtable
 - NGOs – identify key groups to reach out to
 - Workgroups are being charged with developing a communication and outreach strategy, can work all these ideas into a broader coordinated approach
 - Focus on outreach to those who will advance the workgroup mission and have a responsibility to make decisions regarding eflows versus users or stakeholders.
- What should we do if groups approach us and ask to be involved?
 - Water agencies that are developing programs around environmental flows – what criteria should we consider? Need to participate on a regular basis, need to have responsibility in their program that involves making decisions around environmental flows, willing to be collaborative
 - Process = Send requests to the chair/co-chair (interested groups should send a written request to the chair/co-chair and identify their history in eflows and ability to work collaboratively). Have them self-identify specific skills and contributions to the group

- For now, we will welcome all groups who want to participate in a constructive manner – we can revisit this later if it becomes a problem.
- Interested parties should contact the co-chairs. They will have the option to participate as “active participants”, “participants to stay informed” (subscribe to the email list for information only), or as a case-study/”beta tester”.
 - **Action Item** – Eric to revise the charter to reflect the discussions during the meeting.

Workgroup Mechanics

- Meet quarterly – next meetings on May 8th, Aug 14th, and Nov 13th
- Report annually to the WQMC
- Co-chairs selected: Dan Schultz and Robert Holmes. One year term and then revisit.
- Future chairs can be any participating workgroup member

Future Tasks

1. Review draft CEFF workplan and provide comments or suggestions for clarifications or potential future items that may be taken on (either now or at a later time)
2. Develop glossary of key terms
3. Conduct data gaps analysis of needs and data to continue to inform future workgroup priorities
4. Test Tier 1 functional flow metrics (specific locations)
5. Refine Tier 2 approaches and tools
6. Develop a process for knowing how to decide when Tier 2 is needed
7. Conduct statewide ecological flows status and trends assessment – define what this entails first
8. Identify additional case studies and partnerships to pursue them – develop some minimal informational requirements for case studies
9. Establish Environmental Flows portal - LATER
10. Discuss how do we deal with drought and extreme low flows? Trade-offs analysis among ecological endpoints? Among management alternatives?
 - a. Some streams are in drought conditions in most years. How do we evaluate an appropriate flow regime in over-appropriated systems? How to think about ecological flow criteria in highly constrained systems? Maybe need tools to better understand the relationship between flow and ecological response across the full gradient of flow alteration. Understand trade-offs.
11. Explore a trade-offs analysis that applies when water is scarce! Can we identify thresholds of ecological condition? Focus on ecological values and services, other human values and services could be addressed in the future by a sub-group if desired by the workgroup.
12. Develop best data practices – guidance on collection, storage, and sharing (this is included as part of Tier 2 but wasn’t called out in the Tier 2 summary diagrams and steps presented).
13. Develop communications products and an outreach strategy
14. Provide a clear description of each tier 1 product and how it might be used. Organize into a fact sheet

15. Provide summaries of various agency programs and how they interact/relate to each other

Planning for Next Meeting

- **Interim assignments and action items**
 - Revise and redistribute charter
 - Solicit comments on the CEFF workplan
 - Set up Lyris list
 - Reach out to additional partners
 - Provide roster of tech-team members
 - Develop an initial list of terms for the glossary
 - Circulate list of potential future projects and ask participants to rank:
 - Indicate their three highest priorities
 - Indicate what they would be willing/interested to work on
 - Identify other topics or other partners

- Agenda items for May meeting
 - Approve final charter
 - Discuss draft list of technical terms for glossary
 - Present details on hydrologic classification and how it feeds into impaired flows and hydrogeomorphic classification
 - Round robin updates of ongoing projects by workgroup participants
 - Discuss priorities based on survey of workgroup members

 - Future agenda – more distant meeting – talk about groundwater-surface water interactions and SGMA implementation. Maybe a technical presentation from TNC?

***Schedule meetings for the 2nd Tuesday of the quarter – next meeting May 8, August 14, November 13.
– all in Sacramento***