

Better, Stronger, Faster

Roll Out Meeting Notes

UC Davis Mondavi Center

December 18, 2019

12:30pm – 4:30pm

Meeting Goals

1. Introduce the CDFW Better, Stronger, Faster Concept and Recommendations, including process and timeline, and link to advancing Secretary Crowfoot's Cutting the Green Tape Initiative.
2. Acknowledge the participation and contributions of all meeting participants in helping inspire and share the recommendations.
3. Gain feedback, identify shared priorities, commitments and timeline for advancing the recommendations.
4. Establish a process, approach, and conditions for collaboration that will result in achieving priorities.

Opening Remarks: Introduce *Better, Stronger, Faster*: an opportunity to advance solutions, and strengthen stakeholder-CDFW partnership

- Overview of recommendations to improve CDFW programs and processes for “better, stronger, faster” restoration.
- Share goals for the day and upcoming process to move recommendations forward.

Secretary Wade Crowfoot (CA Natural Resources Agency)

- There is an unprecedented diversity of professionals working together, and depth of expertise across agencies, non-profits, for-profits working together today. Huge thanks for attending.
- CA has the greatest concentration of biodiversity in the world; now, there are two crises coming home to roost. We are in a planetary crisis with climate change and a species extinction crisis. Fires are burning up 1/3 of CA land and loss of oxygen in the ocean off the CA coast is more extreme than previously understood.
- The extinction crisis, we deal with every day through CESA and other regulations. But this is like treating in the emergency room for health care policy, it helps individuals stay alive, but if species are always in the emergency room, and if nature is always in this level of crisis, then this is a failed policy.
- We do not want to spend our careers doing this. “There is a tremendous opportunity to do better now”.
- Governor Newsom understands that many people are skeptical about government and one of his internal pillars is government effectiveness. The Governor is impatient with the status quo and is driving us to be more effective to protect, preserve, and restore the environment.
- It's time to “get out of silos.” Each agency has statutory authority, but it all has to add up to something. People want to see action.
- The California Landscape Stewardship Network came to me and explained that we need change, and they had a white paper with possible solutions. That conversation has spurred this conversation. We would like to kick off the Cutting the Green Tape Initiative today.

- CDFW has already begun working on solutions and is ready to share them today. We figured out a way to bring both together.
- Cutting the Green Tape:
 - Plan to develop a white paper by the 50th anniversary of Earth Day to have actions to announce, forcing function, something substantive and concrete to increase pace, scale, and effectiveness.
 - There will be a series of roundtables to discuss permitting and funding opportunities and challenges to develop solutions.
 - “Goal is effectiveness, not just efficiency.”

Director Chuck Bonham (CA Department Fish and Wildlife)

CDFW staff are practitioners, people who are day-to-day trying to change California. We live and die based on community and relationships. This is also very true in restoration, which is part of today’s theme and perspective. When I first started, I felt I had to own an issue; we have predisposition to guard jurisdiction. But these problems are so hard we can never solve them alone, we need community.

There are three rules today: embrace community; confessions and admitting mistakes is fine; and let’s have some fun! One goal today is to get everyone in one place to harness a synergy. We have heard you and are being concrete about our willingness to make changes to our own practices. I would like to leave today with a better understanding of each other. Empathy is an essential ingredient to fully appreciate what is going on with each group. The empathy between us will allow better listening for solving problems.

Better, Stronger, Faster Recommendations

- Overview of recommendations for reforms

Director Chuck Bonham (CA Department Fish and Wildlife)

- Consolidate separate grants into one program headed by Matt Wells. This is to gain efficiencies and is still a work in progress. There is \$65 million a year in different funding sources (examples: fisheries restoration, Prop 1, Prop 68, Wetland Restoration, greenhouse gas reduction funding).
- Fisheries Restoration Grant Program (FRGP) grant program
 - Is the largest and longest running (has been around since the 1980s). Legislators set FRGP up with a peer review committee. Towards end of 2017, the peer review committee recommended some changes to make the program work better. They developed the Restoration Leaders Committee (self-facilitated)- and split into sub-groups to make recommendations.
 - Lean Six Sigma review of the FRGP shrunk processing time for granting, solicitations went from 480 days to 240 days. CDFW took the review and tried to operationalize for the FRGP program.
- This sparked some changes in CDFW. People asked if there was a way to pick a region and really accelerate the process towards recovery instead of avoiding jeopardy. Create strike teams in a region, which are a multi-disciplinary one stop shop in a region. Instead of public dealing with many agencies, the agencies would streamline. This could change the trajectory of a species because it focuses support.

- At same time, groups wanted to talk about what's happening in environmental permitting and planning. Realize that multiple efforts are going on.
- Funding with Regional Conservation Investment Strategies (RCIS) also in process.
- Other ideas include how to shrink timelines for California Endangered Species Act by using National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration Programmatic Biological Opinion.
- Budget augmentation for \$30M in 2019; 30 positions to apply to specific strategies.
 - 30 positions came with contingency only good for 3 years and have to complete service-based budget review.
 - Investment to complete conservation strategies for species that had been sitting idle for years. For all listed species, survey of species status every 5 years to see if health is improving. The goal is to delist species.
 - Specific species reviews conducted. Natural Community Conservation Planning completed and first ever RCIS approved.
 - Database for transportation projects. 38 project approvals under Habitat Retention Agreements in 2017 and 2018.
- Service- or Zero- Based Budgeting:
 - Review by Deloitte shows gap between current performance and mission. Zero Based Budgeting (ZBB) in process, developed dataset that took every task we did to develop task registry of over 3,000 tasks.
 - Roster of tasks creates a budget of person hours and analyzes person hours needed to complete each task.
 - Quantification of what is needed to achieve mission delivery vs. current performance, see what can be done to be more efficient without more money (also shows where improvements can be made).
 - For example: marine boat purchase that improves access rather than hire more people; capital investment may cover gaps without hiring more staff. There is a gap in species protection and conservation work.
- AB 1282: review of permitting transportation projects and figure out better efficiencies is almost done.
 - Lessons learned through this process are transferable. Example: give staff a suite of projects to work on together, this builds teamwork; could put staff together from multiple agencies to permit projects.
- Today CDFW will lay out changes they can make, and then challenges they can't tackle alone, and these will be moved into the Cutting the Green Tape problem-solving effort.

Matt Wells (Grant Program Branch Manager, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife)

- Manages new branch for watershed restoration grants. Brings administrative, science, and program functions together (better align efforts), and balances disparate parts of CDFW.
- Lean Six Sigma helped find efficiencies and put them into practice about how CDFW establishes and communicates grant priorities. The group is coming together to address specific topics about what is needed for restoration projects to succeed.
- 18 recommendations on page 5 in the [title of paper that was handed out during the day] came from review process. We have conducted a review of feasibility and plan to implement all 18 recommendations. The meeting today is a turning point because we have momentum to move forward on these policies.
- The 18 recommendations are a first round, give us a few years to implement and then review success, and then put forward the next 18 recommendations. Examples include

using granting process across the State, thinking about watershed focus or strike team, and completing permitting soup to nuts.

Kevin Shaffer (Fisheries Chief, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife)

- CDFW has heard stakeholders want to see locally owned and locally-run project areas. For strike teams, focus on SF Bay Area Coho, South Fork Eel River, Lagunitas Creek, and Mendocino coast. There is potential to focus Prop 1 funding on these 4 areas, and dedicate staff for a pilot project that uses strike teams in these 4 areas.
- Efforts to streamline permitting and CEQA compliance:
 - Can we use a Federal Agency Biological Opinion for the California Endangered Species Act? Can we use consistency determination, and if not, management approvals for an environmentally beneficial project? Problems often arise when the federal government does not include CDFW in Endangered Species Act consultation along the way (reference to CDFG Code 2081.A).
 - We are working on ability to approve and do good projects instead of worrying about mitigation.
 - Would like Programmatic CEQA strategy similar to the one for FRGP.
 - Wondering about existing CEQA exemptions and can they be used more? There are small restoration projects exemptions, but the small size is still an issue.

What Resonates – Shaping CDFW 2020 Work Plan & Approach to Implementing Recommendations

1) Prioritize and seek alignment with stakeholders on what should be included in 2020

Discussion for group activity:

- What are 2020 priorities?
- What is missing?
- What resonates?

Table A. Facilitator Shelana DeSilva.

- What resonates: Supportive of overall approach and strike teams, but can we move beyond North Coast region and what would it take?
- Challenge: collaborating among multiple agencies is a burden when multiple grants are needed.
- Priorities for 2020:
 - Operationalizing restoration credit agreements in RCIS.
 - Landowner agreements and funding agencies' requirements.
 - More collaboration and understanding for projects with state/federal nexus.
 - Long term management (ex: floodplains along rivers that no one wants).

○ **Table B. Facilitator Kevin Wright.**

- Supportive of Figure B recommendations.
- Focus of the paper is on fish, but there are other species and ecosystems.
- Two key pieces that are internal and external efficiencies. Work towards building connectivity in CDFW and across state agencies.
- Not clear about the longevity of the strike teams and if overlap with other state efforts such Watershed Coordinators? Institutionalizing strike teams at local scale and include other agencies could work towards durability included in approach.

- Discussion of RCIS's, Sonoma is forward-looking, transportation, and housing.
- Start with low-hanging fruit and early wins.
- Need for multi-year funding.
- Caution about being too narrow, restoration takes place in the context of community development, transportation, etc.
- Landscape planning as it relates to development, climate change, but also as it relates to larger landscape goals, might make it easier to invest in individual projects.
- **Table C. Facilitator Sharon Farrell.**
 - The grants focus resonated. We need strategies and flexibility for working on grants, flexibility on budgets and administration.
 - Need to ensure alignment in thinking from Headquarters to field staff. There need to be changes at all levels of staff to see strategies, easier way for users (examples budgets administration), change and working collaboratively.
 - Ready to get going on strike teams.
 - Strong sense of urgency for permit efficiencies, part of Cutting the Green Tape.
- **Table D. Facilitator Jay Chamberlin.**
 - Appreciation to Chuck Bonham and CDFW for effort.
 - Discussed tying grant making to permit efficiencies (how to make more like FRGP) and communicated to stakeholders.
 - Liked the strike team idea and how to involve other agencies.
 - Interest in expanding this model. For example, how to define and involve multi-species projects? Another example includes the CA Water Resilience Portfolio available soon.
- **Table F. Facilitator Darcie Collins.**
 - General consensus of support for paper.
 - What resonates:
 - One stop/cross discipline shop.
 - Watershed-specific focus.
 - Missing:
 - Need for consensus and trust among stakeholders.
 - Creative ways for mitigation and ability for block granting.
- **Table E. Facilitator Jim Robins**
 - Discussion about culture and risk.
 - What's missing is a direction (in the form of a mandate) from the governor to permeate all state agencies.
 - Devil is in the details about grant process to get desired effect. Interest in unified procedures for grant accounting procedures.
 - Importance of conservation planning (example RCIS), cross departmental, and CDFW working with other agencies.
 - Useful to have more structured problem statement to explain why it takes 10 to 20 years to bring project from idea to implementation. How can this be reduced to 3 to 5 years?
- **Table G. Facilitator Kim Caringer**
 - What resonates: Strike teams (prioritize watersheds).
 - What's missing: landowner outreach strategy from local, state agencies.

- Shifting burden of risk. Empower individual staff to make decisions, one staff person can make or break a project. Give staff the authority to make decisions and reduce risks.
- **Table H. Facilitator Kellyx Nelson**
 - Solid support with strike teams, but lots of questions (How were current locations chosen? ability to expand in the future?).
 - Theme: looking outside department (sister agencies and planning efforts), tying to regional or watershed (programmatic CEQA) efforts. Second theme about culture (missing from white paper, but experienced on the ground), yearning for sense of partnership. What are other models? Where to put recommendations or concerns, put in other categories.
Look outside of dept and do with sister agencies and in context of other planning efforts, streamlining should include coordination permitting with other agencies
How do separate agencies actions fit into broader picture?
- Overall summary:
 - Lots of support for conversations and glad that this process is happening.
 - This is complicated so let's work together to sort through some details.
 - Excitement around the strike team idea so let's try this model and see how it works.
 - 2020 priorities are strategic planning across watersheds.
 - What does CDFW want to put forward? What can people in this room do to be supportive? And how does this relate back to Cutting the Green Tape effort?
 - Audience comment: Important to have executive order to create mandate for a cultural shift toward working across agencies and articulating a shared vision.

Summary & Next Steps

Director Chuck Bonham (CA Department Fish and Wildlife)

- We heard you, there's no doubt. What's different this time?
 - Convergence of audience, everyone is more aware, more organization and communication with Governor. This also includes new laws.
 - Towards the end of my career, I have an appetite for doing something. That's what is being practiced by this group for restoration.
 - Once Wade Crowfoot sets his mind to something he doesn't stop until he achieves it. Newsom is motivated and supportive as well.
- Next steps:
 - Need to figure out how to memorialize (for example, memo or policy).
 - Figure out way for group to stay involved and tie into Cutting the Green Tape.
 - Develop method and frequency to check in the next year and future about the 18 recommendations. CDFW counting on this group to be partners in this work and to help course correct.
 - CDFW will do what they can do alone, things they can't do alone will push into Cutting the Green Tape. For example, how do we use CEQA exemptions?
 - Spirit of friends and family.

- Questions and comments:
 - Question: How to resolve legal conflicts and liability. Have you brought these recommendations to the legal department?
 - Response by Chuck Bonham: Staff are supportive, but there are worries about the follow through. Conversations with regional staff indicate they want to know that Headquarters is serious. They said, “if you’re serious, we’re game, but we want to know that this is real”. Legal is trying to find solutions. Legal office is working with Erika Lovejoy on different pathways for legal approvals. Better description for purpose or type of project to help reframe the narrative around risk. Staff can spend their entire career protecting a particular species. Solutions include defining projects differently for beneficial purpose. This is the work to focus on as Director of CDFW.
 - Comment: Tribes are missing, which provide a perspective of stewarding for over 10,000 years.
 - Response by Chuck Bonham: Realizes working with tribes needs improvement.
 - Comment: How will there be endorsement of getting the 18 recommendations done with more continuing.
 - Response by Chuck Bonham: - Will hire someone to focus on implementing 18 recommendations. Divide into groups and be on parallel tracks for working on what CDFW can do on one side, and what is done by larger group through Cutting the Green Tape on the other side. Eventually we will have the discussion with lawyers and accountants for grant accounting.
 - Comment: Where does money come from for restoration?
 - Response by Chuck Bonham: Money comes from grants and mitigation.
 - Suggestion from audience to get more money from mitigation. For-profit companies trying to bring new resources.
 - Question: What is the vision for next 20 to 40 years to accommodate changes for conservation planning (e.g. population growth, transportation)?
 - Response by Chuck Bonham: CA is a biodiversity hotspot and also a leader in loss. Answer is to stop doing the postage stamp restoration projects. The future is regional planning, determine what is the most fundamental restoration priority and do those. Another example potential project includes fixing all the culverts that are fish passage barriers at once with one big permit. It will provide so much mitigation credit Caltrans won’t know what to do with it. Wildlife corridors, building that into development, build it smarter right now. Have to give so much advance mitigation credit that it’s enticing.