

SANTA ANA RIVER WATERSHED
SANTA ANA SUCKER CONSERVATION TEAM
MEETING NOTES

June 23, 2011

PARTICIPANTS

David Garcia
Dick Zembal
Roy Leidy
Bonnie Johnson
Lisa Cibellis
Heather Dyer
Karly Gaynor
Rachel Hamilton
Lisa Haney
Art Baggett
Danielle Maurizio
Jennifer Shepardson
Val Housel
Jeff Crider
Jim Van Haun
Joanna Gibson
Jeff Beehler

REPRESENTATIVE

Riverside Public Utilities
OCWD/SAWA
AECOM/SBVMWD
Orange County Water District
Orange County Public Works
US FWS
WMWD
Inland Empire Water Keeper
OCS D
Kennedy Jenks/WMWD
Chino Basin Water Master
City of San Bernardino MWD
City of San Bernardino MWD
SBVMWD/Consultant
Cons. Team Consultant (by phone)
CA DFG (by phone)
SAWPA

1. **Introductions and Announcements:** The Santa Ana Sucker Conservation Team meeting was called to order at 1:35 p.m. by Jeff Beehler at the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority (SAWPA) located at 11615 Sterling Avenue, Riverside, CA 92503.
 - a. Critical Habitat: Possible Litigation
A number of upper wash agencies have given the US Fish and Wildlife Service a 60 day notice of litigation concerning the recent listing of critical habitat for the Santa Ana sucker. There were no additional updates provided.
 - b. Announcements. Jeff Beehler announced:
 - a. Steven Mitchell, UCR Science Librarian, contacted the group about Steelhead restoration activities along the Santa Ana. He has also contacted Riverside's Mayor Loveridge. Jeff Beehler referred him to the California Native Fishes Group at Cal Poly. He may be contacting team participants for information.
 - b. Jeff Crider has been employed by Upper Wash Agencies to develop press materials on the Critical Habitat issue. Jeff Beehler provided him background information on the Conservation Team.
 - c. A news article was distributed about a shooting incident between several off-roaders in the Colton Wash. Off-road use is still heavy despite increased law enforcement activities in the area.
 - c. Meeting notes for May, 2011 were approved by participants. They will be posted on the SAWPA website after approval.

2. Agreements

a. Conservation Team Agreement

i. Participants

The Conservation Team agreement was approved by the SAWPA Commission on April 19. The Orange County Water District Board has recently approved the agreement. Several other agencies have approval in-process. There was additional discussion of the work plan for next year focused on the need for increased surveillance activity. A draft budget was distributed for review and discussion. Team priorities were discussed given limited resources with the highest priority development of the Corps 404 documentation. The Team will review the budget and finalize priorities based on the number of participants.

ii. Corps 404 Agreement

Heather Dyer distributed a spreadsheet for quantifying potential impacts from on-going maintenance activities. Those interested in participating in the permit were encouraged to describe their projects using the spreadsheet. Some agencies have set appointments to meet with Heather to review the spreadsheet. Others were encouraged to do so. The spreadsheet will be posted on the SAWPA web page.

b. Corps 404 Maintenance Permit

i. Selection of Dates and Schedule for FWS Discussion

Heather Dyer has reviewed the Biological Opinion for the draft 404 permit developed several years ago. She would like to review updated assessments of potential impacts based on Conservation Team annual reports. A spreadsheet will be provided for summarizing potential impacts and meetings will be set with the FWS to clarify, if necessary. It should be noted that these discussions are informational and are used to properly cover as many activities as possible.

3. Biology/Ecology Updates

a. Seven Oaks Dam Test/Habitat Survey

David Garcia and Heather Dyer gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Santa Ana River Habitat Survey conducted as part of the Seven Oaks Dam gate test. Surveys were conducted before and after the gate tests using the methodology developed as part of the Riverwalk surveys. A subset of Riverwalk sites was sampled.

At downstream survey sites, a decline of gravel and cobble was noted and an increase in sand/silt substrate occurred after the dam release. Subsequent sampling showed that spring base flow re-exposed gravel and cobble. An area noted to be the end of the continuous habitat in the 2010 survey, was shown to have increased from 5 to 20% gravel and cobble. As these data were based on survey results, no variances were reported and significance could not be calculated. The survey also found that the morphology of the River had changed markedly since the fall, 2010 Riverwalk with many more channels and braids being created.

It was suggested that the Riverwalk could be improved by developing methods to quantitatively measure substrate cover and changes, do follow-up “quality control” visits as part of the survey, and to produce a training video to brief participants. It was also noted that the Riverwalk provided the only source of repeated, survey data of substrate in the River.

b. Sunnyslope Creek Restoration

Removal of non-native fish occurred last month with 93 exotic predators removed in a day-long effort. There is also interest in removing some of the palm trees that are obstructing flow, doing some reencountering and providing pools that support invasive predators.

c. Sucker Breeding Activity

Jonathan Baskin provided a memo summarizing recent sampling efforts. He noted larval suckers in the Rialto Drain and in the River between Rialto and RIX.

4. Adjournment Next Meeting July 21, 2011