

**TRI-COUNTY F.I.S.H. TEAM  
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

*Prepared for:*

**TRI-COUNTY F.I.S.H. TEAM**

*Prepared by:*

**ENTRIX, INC.**  
Walnut Creek, CA

Project No. 317403

**March 26, 2002**

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The Tri-County F.I.S.H. Team was founded in 2000 to increase the flow of salmonid restoration funding to the south-central California coastal counties of San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura. In these three counties, steelhead are listed under the federal Endangered Species Act as threatened and endangered, but a relatively small percentage of statewide salmonid restoration dollars is targeted to projects from the tri-county area. During early discussions within the group, it became apparent that a regional group would be uniquely suited to providing additional benefits to the local restoration community. The Tri-County FISH Team has worked over the last two years to organize itself, articulate the needs of local participants, and develop a framework for addressing these needs.

The purpose of this report is to describe who the Tri-County FISH Team is and what the group intends to do. To achieve this end, this report presents a brief overview of the history of the group, describes the regional needs that need to be addressed, and lays out how the group will be implemented. This report presents the organizational structure of the group, its mission, goals, and objectives, and the types of activities the group will undertake to achieve its objectives. Additional background information on the Tri-County FISH Team is also provided as is an example of the group's efforts to date. This report presents one of the Tri-County FISH Team's first efforts to address a component of an identified regional need; restoration project planning.

## **1.1 OVERVIEW**

Local government agencies, water agencies, environmental groups and other local organizations in San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura counties (Tri-County Region) recognize the need for promoting a regional voice for south-central California coast fisheries issues. Through a grant from the California Resources Agency, these local groups have come together to form the Tri-County F.I.S.H. Team (Funding for Improved Salmonid Habitat) (hereafter referred to as the FISH Team). The FISH Team works on fishery restoration and recovery issues, with a current focus on threatened and endangered steelhead, within the tri-county area. The FISH Team has recently established its organization structure and operating procedures. As part of the grant from the Resources Agency, the FISH Team has developed this Implementation Plan which outlines the FISH Team's goals, objectives, and priorities for the future.

## **1.2 ORIGINATION OF THE TRI-COUNTY FISH TEAM**

The south-central coast of California has recently begun to provide an organized network for salmonid restoration. The Pacific northwest and parts of northern California have a more developed watershed and regional process in place. The model for the formation of the FISH Team was based on the success of two regional organizations in the central and northern part of the state (FishNet 4C and the 5 Northern Counties, respectively). These organizations were able to provide a regional framework for grant funding needs within their respective regions. They were also able to provide technical support at a regional level that each local county could benefit from. The regional framework proved useful for assisting in the prioritization of funding allocations at the state-level and fosters salmonid restoration in general.

Seeing the success of these regional groups, the California Resources Agency began discussions with several local government and special districts in the south-central portion of the state. Steelhead restoration activities were needed and were underway in this region, however limited regional coordination was occurring. Thus, at the state level, it was difficult to prioritize needs to determine what projects should receive a share of limited restoration funding. The Resources Agency requested that a regional group, similar to FishNet 4C and the Five Northern Counties, be created in the south-central coast area. The City of Santa Barbara received a grant from the Resources Agency to provide funding for local government agencies and special districts to form such a regional group. The FISH Team expanded participation to a broader range of stakeholders, compared to their more northern counterparts, as local restoration work was being done by a broad range of agencies and organizations in the tri-county area. Thus, the FISH Team includes not only county governments, like the two northern groups, but also cities, special districts and non-governmental organizations which are collectively referred to as the FISH Team "participants."

The original formation meetings took place in 2000 and at that time the group was called the South-Central Coast Regional Fish Advisory Group. More recently, the name was changed to the Tri-County FISH Team. The FISH Team is composed of all agencies and organizations who wish to participate and is guided by a nine member Executive Committee (EC) and the FISH Team Coordinator (see Appendix A). The coverage of this third regional group picks up where FishNet 4C leaves off, by including San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura counties (Figure 1-1). The salmonid streams in these three counties have similar climates, hydrology, levels of development, and biological constraints. Another regional salmonid restoration group, the Southern California Steelhead Coalition, works from Santa Barbara County south to San Diego and therefore covers some of the same geographic area as the FISH Team. The FISH Team and the Southern California Steelhead Coalition have differing group activities, core participating entities, and other differences. However, there are also several similar objectives and therefore both groups are currently exploring how they can work together to achieve their common goals.

### **1.3 PURPOSE & ORGANIZATION OF THIS IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

The purpose of this report is to present regional needs the FISH Team will work to address, the goals and objectives for the FISH Team that resulted from the needs assessment, and more specifically, the types of actions the FISH Team will undertake to achieve the goals and objectives. The needs assessment is presented in Section 2 and the implementation framework for the FISH Team is outlined in Section 3.

Additional background information on the organization and composition of the FISH Team is provided in Appendix A. The FISH Team's organizational structure and operating documents (the Memorandum of Understanding and Procedures document) are also provided in this section. Appendix B outlines a framework for addressing one of the FISH Team's objectives, a method for prioritization of restoration project activities.

Together, the main document and appendices provide the foundation for how the FISH Team is structured, how it will operate, and what it intends to do in the future to promote salmonid restoration in the tri-county area.

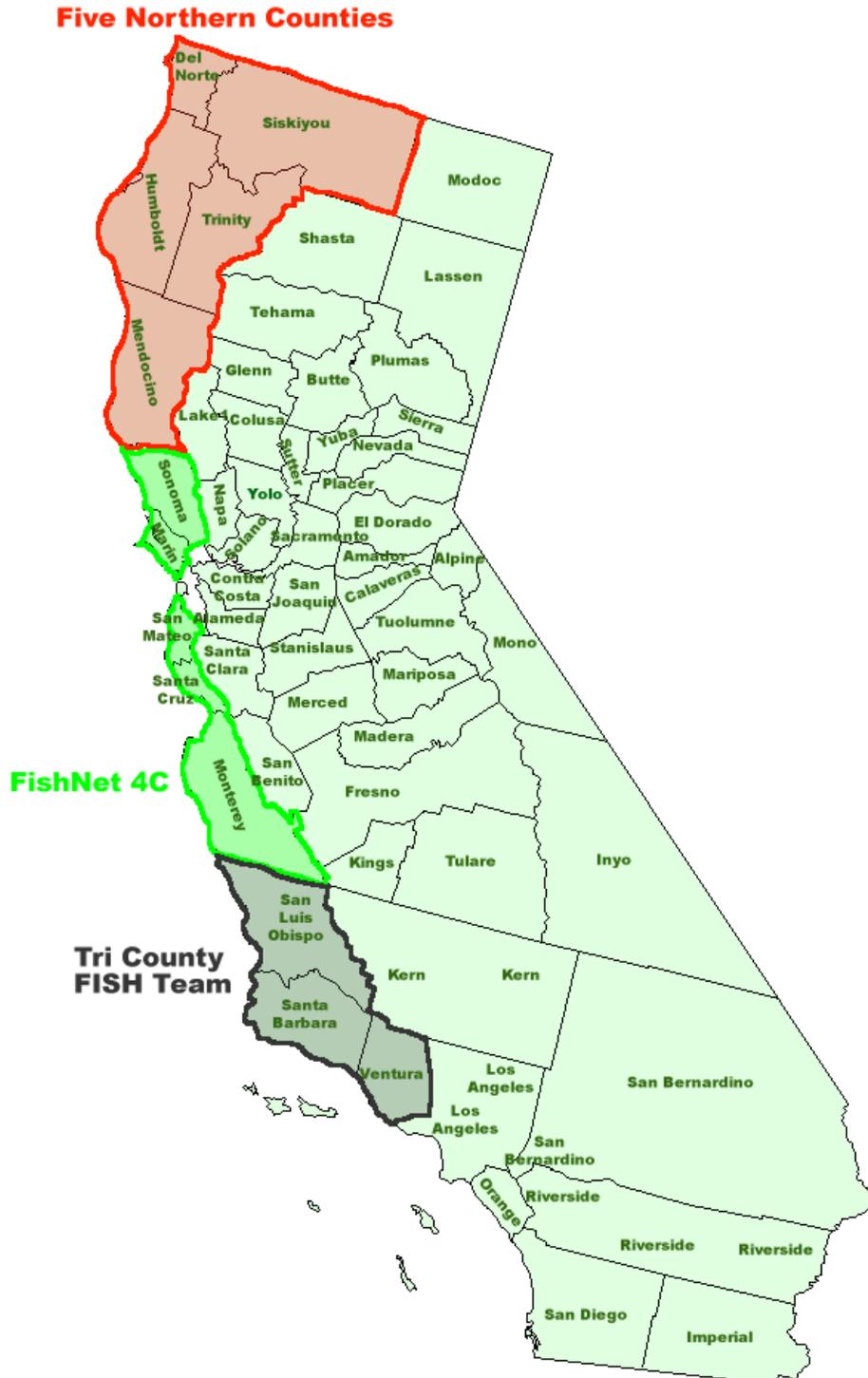


Figure 1-1. Geographic Distribution of the 5 Northern Counties Group, FishNet 4C, and the Tri-County FISH Team Covering the Range of Listed Coastal Steelhead ESUs

The California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) has conducted a statewide assessment of the steelhead populations. According to the *Steelhead Restoration and Management Plan for California* (McEwan & Jackson, 1996), “southern steelhead stocks are the most jeopardized of all of California’s steelhead populations”<sup>1</sup>. According to this DFG document, of the steelhead streams south of San Francisco, 47% have reduced production from historical levels and 33% no longer have steelhead populations. DFG has determined that restoration of these populations should be a high priority.

Based on DFG’s assessment, it is clear that work to restore steelhead habitat is necessary if steelhead numbers are to recover. There are a large number of federal, state, and local agencies and organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, that are involved in steelhead restoration activities. Through coordination, these efforts can result in a greater benefit for fishery resources than each agency/organization acting alone.

A number of needs for successful fish restoration efforts have been identified within the area from San Luis Obispo county south to the Ventura area. Priority needs in the tri-county area include:

- identification of and coordination among local restoration and enhancement efforts,
- additional funding resources for restoration efforts;
- identification of regional and watershed-level restoration project priorities;
- additional staffing resources within state and federal agencies;
- increased public awareness and support for fishery restoration;
- improved understanding of scientific information for fishery management and of methods for designing successful restoration projects; and
- development a recovery plan for the steelhead in the region.

The FISH Team will work to address these needs (see Section 3) and will be a resource in the region to the two resource agencies responsible for steelhead management (DFG and the National Marine Fisheries Service [NMFS]).

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<sup>1</sup> here “southern steelhead” refers to those occurring south of San Francisco Bay

## **2.1 IDENTIFICATION & COORDINATION OF LOCAL RESTORATION EFFORTS**

Steelhead restoration efforts on the south-central California coast lack coordination to the degree found to be successful in the northern part of the state and the Pacific northwest. There are examples of considerable coordination between local stakeholders and resource managers within a few watersheds in each of the three counties. However, much of the other work that occurs does so when a site-specific need is identified rather than as part of a broader planning effort. These individual activities could, in many cases, benefit from learning about other similar efforts in their region. In addition, many groups have overlap between their geographic coverage, and to a lesser extent, their missions.

Having a regional group that acts to foster coordination and communication among these more local entities can result in broader benefits for steelhead. By providing a forum for local groups to share information about who they are, what they do, and where they do it, duplication of efforts can be minimized. This leads to a better use of limited resources. In addition, effective communication and coordination can assist in this flow of expertise and experience in salmonid-related issues. Groups like For the Sake of the Salmon have been involved in restoration efforts for some time and have a wealth of information and resources available for local groups. In addition, local participants can share similar or successful experiences which can be replicated in other locations with minimal effort.

The limited staffing at the resource agencies makes it difficult for DFG or NMFS to work individually with every interested party in their regions. A regional coordination effort can assist resource agency staff in building relationships with a broader range of stakeholders and providing a place for them to learn about existing activities, resource needs, where their assistance would be most beneficial, and provide information to a broader forum. Similarly, a regional group can provide the necessary communication link between the multitude of local stakeholders and other regional, state, and federal processes. The larger the geographic area covered, the more difficult it is to have every local group represented. Since California is a large state with varied climate, geography, resources, and needs, having smaller regional groups to work with provides state personnel with an important link to the more localized, on-the-ground efforts.

## **2.2 RESTORATION PROJECT FINANCING**

The original impetus for forming the FISH Team was the need for tri-county-area projects to be more successful in receiving restoration dollars than they had in the past. In recent funding cycles, projects from the south-central coast region have been more successful than in past years; however concerns still remain. For instance, in the 2001 DFG funding cycle, approximately 20 out of over 200 proposals were from the tri-county region. In addition, the quality of projects and grant proposals from the south-coast counties needs to be improved if these proposals are to be competitive with other parts of the state. Part of the latter problem arises from the fact that there are limited resources available, both financially and within resource agency staff, to assist potential project sponsors in developing good projects and proposals. The overall amount of money available for salmonid restoration projects needs to be maintained, and increased if possible.

Finally, various funding sources come with statutory limits on what can and cannot be funded from that particular source and with narrow time limits to expend the funds. Frequently, the agency that is assigned to disburse the money adds further restrictions which can make the funding source less useful than was originally intended for some types of salmonid restoration projects. This can limit the ability of project proponents to use certain funding sources to complete a restoration project in the manner most effective for the resource (e.g. one funding source limits the replacement of culverts with bridges). A regional group can be more effective at addressing such issues than individual efforts.

### **2.3 REGIONAL AND WATERSHED-LEVEL RESTORATION PLANNING**

A limiting factor for developing successful projects and proposals is the lack of funding for conducting assessments and developing watershed management plans. Typically, proposals for projects recommended in a management plan are more successful at obtaining funding and result in broader benefits to the resource because each project is part of a broader, coordinated effort. However, local resource agency staffing levels are insufficient for these agencies to conduct the regional and watershed-level assessments internally (see Section 2.4) leading to a many watersheds in the tri-county area without such plans. Therefore, many of the projects that are proposed are generated at the local level where there appears to be a biological need and local interest in moving the project forward, but the watershed or regional assessment to determine the potential biological benefit of the project in a broader context is not available.

Identifying and addressing such gaps in existing fishery restoration efforts is an important step in restoring steelhead to south-central coast streams. This step will require coordination and management at both the regional and watershed levels. An inventory of factors and activities limiting steelhead in the tri-county region needs to occur along with an assessment of the activities already underway to address these limitations. Recommendations regarding key restoration priorities within the region should be developed. Such an analysis would provide a coordinated, regional framework for developing and implementing restoration projects. At the watershed-level, a regional group can foster development of management plans in local watersheds through education and capacity building exercises. A regional group can also assist in generating the necessary funding for conducting watershed-level assessments or managing watershed groups.

### **2.4 RESOURCE AGENCY STAFFING LEVELS**

Resource agency (DFG and NMFS) staffing levels have made it difficult to move forward with projects in recent years, especially in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties. Personnel dedicated to assisting with steelhead and watershed management issues are fewer in number in the southern part of the state, compared to more northern areas. This leads to project proponents and restoration efforts receiving less attention and assistance from the resource agencies. Until late 2001, a single DFG fisheries biologist was responsible for all of Santa Barbara and Ventura counties. A new steelhead biologist was recently hired in the southern part of the state, however her responsibilities include the five counties from Santa Barbara south. A second DFG fisheries position for this

southern region is currently being filled. However, given the number of agencies and organizations working on steelhead-related issues and the number of groups working on developing projects for steelhead restoration, the existing DFG staffing resources remain insufficient. This leaves local restoration workers to attempt to develop watershed plans, conduct watershed assessments, and develop projects and proposals with less than the needed level of assistance from the state resource agency.

NMFS has the responsibility, under the federal Endangered Species Act, for protection of listed salmonids, including steelhead. NMFS staffing for the tri-county area occurs out of their office in Long Beach. Currently four people in the NMFS office are responsible for issuing permits in the tri-county area and working with local agencies as projects are developed. The travel distance and large area of coverage make it difficult for NMFS staff to provide the needed technical assistance and guidance in the development of projects to benefit the protected resource. In addition, high staffing turnover levels make it difficult for restoration practitioners to maintain a working relationship and a project history with NMFS staff. This can lead to difficulty during the proposal review process, permitting, and implementation phases of a project.

A regional group can provide a greater voice in working with resource agencies to generate the necessary budgetary changes to result in increased staffing levels. In addition, the group can work with participants and resource agency staff to maximize the available resources for accomplishing steelhead restoration work in our area.

## **2.5 PUBLIC EDUCATION & OUTREACH**

It is widely known among those who work towards restoring steelhead that much of the habitat used by these fish is located on private lands. The public and local landowners will be integral to any coordinated steelhead recovery effort. Public education and outreach is already occurring on a local level. Several of the participants in the FISH Team have public and landowner outreach components to their efforts. Broader outreach campaigns would also benefit steelhead restoration efforts on both the local and statewide levels by improving public understanding of the resource, its needs, and ways the public can help.

A regional group can foster public education and outreach on many levels. First, many local stakeholders are already successfully involving the public and landowners in their planning and restoration processes. Providing a forum and method for sharing both successful and unsuccessful methods for existing outreach activities can benefit local efforts. By capitalizing on a successful outreach program, startup and development costs for future efforts can be reduced and the likelihood of success increased. Second, by working together, a broader group of people can be reached to generate public support for steelhead restoration in general. Recent efforts in San Luis Obispo county to declare October Salmon and Steelhead awareness month could be expanded through assistance by a regional group to other local counties and across the state. Such public outreach can translate into support at the local, state, and federal level for additional resources targeted to steelhead, stream, and watershed restoration. At the regional level, groups can work together with other regions to move forward broader initiatives that benefit restoration

efforts across the state and Pacific coast. Local, regional and statewide outreach can foster steelhead recovery by working to educate the public and foster good-will among landowners with influence over salmonid habitat.

In addition to generating public support for salmonid restoration activities, outreach needs to occur to those that work in and around steelhead habitat. Public Works personnel, for example, need to be educated regarding best management practices for their activities in streams and riparian habitats. Education of landowners in these areas can also foster preservation and restoration of salmonid habitat. A regional group is uniquely situated to develop and implement the outreach and education programs for these audiences.

## **2.6 SCIENTIFIC & TECHNICAL RESOURCES**

Two south-central coast steelhead Evolutionarily Significant Units have been identified because they are “substantially reproductively isolated from other populations” and “contribute substantially to the ecological or genetic diversity of the biological species” (Busby et al., 1996). Steelhead inhabiting the southern end of their range are believed to be adapted to recurring drought cycles, higher water temperatures, and the flashy hydrologic nature of local streams (Titus et al, *in press*). However, much of the lifehistory information that is used as a basis for managing steelhead was developed using more northern populations of steelhead (McEwan and Jackson, 1996). Resource managers are missing vital lifehistory information that allows for adequate management of the local resource. DFG highlights this limitation in the *Steelhead Restoration and Management Plan for California* (McEwan and Jackson, 1996): “...basic life history and other biological information is necessary to understand the nature and characteristics of a stock so that appropriate management and response to adverse actions can be undertaken...Much of what is believed to be true of southern steelhead, for example, is based on general life history characteristics of more northerly winter steelhead stocks.” Such information needs to be generated for the benefit of steelhead management in the entire south coast region. Because of the cost, scientific expertise, and permitting requirements of such research, local agencies are not in a position to independently sponsor this work. A regional group could work with local managers and resource agency staff to identify research needs and develop partnerships for getting important research done.

In addition, because of the different climate, geomorphology, and hydrology of southern California streams, many of the techniques that have been developed for assessing fish passage, instream flow needs, and fish habitat quality may not directly apply. Because of these varying conditions, it is important that technical solutions to problems be shared among those working on steelhead restoration issues at the southern end of this species’ range. To develop and distribute information on successful restoration and management techniques, a reporting program should be established. A regional group can provide the needed communication link between resource agency staff, project proponents, and others working on similar issues.

Finally, local resource agency personnel are currently spread to thin to allow them to provide all of the technical resources needed within the region. Participants in the regional group can be a resource to each other. A regional group can assist in this area by linking available resources with those in need, providing additional resources internally, and by providing a forum for agency personnel to work within so that they can provide assistance to more than one group at a time.

## **2.7 RECOVERY PLANNING**

NMFS is responsible for developing a recovery plan for the southern steelhead stocks. Phase I of this process includes creation a technical review team that will develop the criteria for removing these steelhead stocks from the endangered or threatened species list. Phase II involves NMFS working with public stakeholders to determine what actions need to occur restore the species to the established level for de-listing. The recovery planning process is being initiated in the region south of San Francisco for the two ESUs located here.

Many local stakeholders have expressed interest in participating in this process but are uncertain how their voices will be heard. NMFS has acknowledged the importance of local recovery efforts and has agreed to work with these groups as they attempt to plan for steelhead recovery. A regional group can work with NMFS to provide a forum for communication between NMFS and the group stakeholders, to distribute information about the effort, and provide a broader-based voice for concerns relating to recovery planning in the region. A regional group would also be able to provide NMFS with information related to the types of local efforts already occurring within the tri-county area and the success or difficulties that have occurred in past and on-going restoration efforts.

In addition, while not responsible for determining recovery criteria under the federal ESA, DFG is working to develop watershed management plans that will foster steelhead recovery. The regional group could assist DFG in communication, identification of data, and foster formation of local stakeholder groups to develop their own local plan (see Section 2.3).

The FISH Team has spent the last two years developing an organization structure, identifying the needs of the region, conducting outreach to potential group participants, and working to address the regional needs. The latter activities, however, have suffered from the lack of a clear structure and a clear plan on what the group was attempting to achieve, and how that group would achieve it. The purpose of this report is to clearly present the needs for a regional group in the tri-county area (Section 2) and identify how the FISH Team will be implemented to address those needs (this Section). To this end, this section presents the mission, goals, and objectives of the FISH Team and identifies the types of activities the FISH Team will undertake to further the identified objectives. A brief summary of the implementation framework for the FISH Team is also presented.

### **3.1 MISSION, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES**

The mission, goals, and objectives of the FISH Team were established based on the regional coordination needs identified for the tri-county area and modeled after those developed by FishNet 4C (2000).

Mission – To improve salmonid habitat conditions and to implement restoration work that promotes long-term recovery of naturally-spawned salmonid populations.

Goals – To facilitate local and regional actions that will improve our region’s instream and riparian habitat, provide assistance and education to local stakeholders, increase the resources dedicated to such activities, and encourage cooperation and coordination between all levels of responsibility for fishery restoration.

#### Objectives

1. Facilitate communication and coordination among groups involved in salmonid restoration in the tri-county region.
2. Secure long-term funding to support the region’s fishery restoration efforts.
3. Identify gaps in the tri-county region’s fishery restoration efforts and work to eliminate such gaps.
4. Secure additional staffing resources within the Department of Fish and Game and the National Marine Fisheries Service to assist in restoration project and recovery planning.
5. Develop a public education and outreach plan that focuses (1) on the status of steelhead and generates public support for restoration actions and (2) on continuing education for land users and local government staff regarding fish-friendly practices.

6. Improve the scientific and technical understanding of the resource, its needs, and successful restoration practices.
7. Assist in recovery planning efforts for steelhead.

### **3.2 PRIMARY ACTIVITIES**

The FISH Team needs to direct the majority of its efforts to the regional level. Actions should be directed at providing resources, training, and public education at the county and regional level to maximize the use of available resources and minimize duplication of efforts. It is clear that the implementation of on-the-ground projects should remain the responsibility of individual participating organizations as they have the local knowledge and landowner contacts to effectively implement these efforts. The regional group needs to design its activities and programs to compliment those being conducted at the local level by assisting in extending successful programs to reach new areas, providing training to participants, communicating information between broader geographic efforts and the local participants, being a voice for local participants in broader restoration efforts, and conducting an assessment of local policies and practices to determine where efforts should be focused to improve conditions for steelhead.

At the state level, FISH Team efforts should be focussed on continuing to work with other regional groups to maintain grant funding resources and on translating successful efforts, as appropriate, to the tri-county region. At the inter-state level, the FISH Team needs to work to develop additional resources for the south-central California coast, specifically, and the State of California, in general. These efforts are typically focused on generating the legislative allocations and budget appropriations to programs that can provide resources for salmonid restoration and resource agency staffing. To be effective in continuing the flow of these resources, the FISH Team needs to work at all levels.

The FISH Team has given consideration to the types of activities it will undertake to implement the goals and objectives outlined above. A bulleted list of general types of FISH Team activities is presented below organized under the specific objective each activity targets most directly. Several activities would promote multiple objectives, however each activity is only presented once.

Objective 1. Facilitate communication and coordination among groups involved in salmonid restoration in the tri-county region.

- Conduct monthly FISH Team Executive Committee conference calls to guide the activities of the group.
- Conduct quarterly, public meetings of the FISH Team to facilitate regional coordination, provide a forum for sharing information between stakeholder groups, dissemination of information, and other activities.

- Establish communication pathways to facilitate group coordination (e.g. email, website).
- Coordinate with other southern California regional partners (e.g. Southern California Wetlands Recovery Program and Southern California Steelhead Coalition) to achieve our mutual goals.
- Collaborate with state and regional efforts to restore salmonids and use established programs, where applicable, as a model in the tri-county area.
- Develop close working relationships with local DFG, NMFS, and USFWS staff and solicit their participation in the FISH Team.
- Conduct outreach to additional agencies and organizations within the tri-county area to increase participation within the FISH Team.
- Create additional work groups within the FISH Team, as necessary, to assist in implementation of the objectives.

Objective 2. Secure long-term funding to support the region's fishery restoration efforts.

- Collaborate with local, regional and statewide efforts to ensure that fiscal support of fishery restoration programs, including the Pacific Coastal Salmonid Initiative, are continued.

Objective 3. Identify gaps in the tri-county region's fishery restoration efforts and work to eliminate such gaps.

- Conduct an inventory of local policies and activities to determine existing institutional mechanisms that protect steelhead, identify gaps in steelhead protections, and develop a regional plan to address the gaps.
- Provide guidance on project priorities within the tri-county region.
- Link technical advice and support on project and proposal development to group participants seeking to implement fishery restoration activities.
- Foster development of local watershed restoration efforts.

Objective 4. Secure additional staffing resources within the Department of Fish and Game and the National Marine Fisheries Service to assist in restoration project and recovery planning.

- Work with DFG, NMFS, and other efforts to increase agency resources in the tri-county area.

Objective 5. Develop a public education and outreach plan that focuses (1) on the status of steelhead and generates public support for restoration actions and (2) on continuing education for land users and local government staff regarding fish-friendly practices.

- Work with DFG, NMFS, For the Sake of the Salmon, and others to sponsor technical workshops to educate local stakeholders about salmonid restoration practices.
- Conduct outreach to local watershed groups, cities, county agencies and resource agencies regarding the FISH Team program.
- Foster private and public support for fishery restoration within the tri-county region through sponsorship of a website, workshops, newsletters, site visits, and other outreach mechanisms.
- Disseminate press releases regarding its purpose and procedures, meeting schedules, and other logistic and organizational information at need.
- Press releases providing details of specific projects or programs of the FISH Team shall be reviewed by Executive Committee members for consistency or conflicts with member organization policies prior to release. If a majority of members approve of release wording but an individual member organization cannot support the document as written for statutory or policy reasons, that exception shall be noted in the body of the release.

Objective 6. Improve the scientific and technical understanding of the resource, its needs, and successful restoration practices.

- Identify gaps in existing lifehistory information needed to manage steelhead restoration and recovery.
- Coordinate development of proposals to address scientific and technical needs in the region.
- Participate in and/or sponsor workshops, conferences, or training programs.

Objective 7. Assist in recovery planning efforts for steelhead.

- Host workshops/meetings with NMFS to share information regarding Recovery Planning
- Foster communications between NMFS and FISH Team participants.

### **3.3 ANNUAL WORK PLAN**

An annual Work Plan for the FISH Team will be developed each year and approved by the Executive Committee. The Work Plan will specifically list those actions that will be undertaken during that year to foster the goals and objectives of the FISH Team. The activities will be consistent with those listed in Section 3.2 above. A planning schedule and budget for implementation of these activities will also be provided as part of the Work Plan. The budget will be presented for review and approval as outlined in the FISH Team Memorandum of Understanding (see Appendix A).

The annual Work Plan will provide the specific guidelines to implement the activities of the FISH Team for a particular year. The FISH Team Coordinator will work with the Executive Committee, standing FISH Team Work Groups, FISH Team participants, and others to implement the components of the Work Plan over the course of the year. The Executive Committee will meet regularly with the FISH Team Coordinator to monitor progress on Work Plan implementation and provide guidance to the Coordinator.

### **3.4 ANNUAL REPORT**

Each year, the FISH Team will develop a report summarizing the FISH Team activities conducted during the previous year. The purpose of the report is to evaluate the previous year's work and lay the foundation for the following year's Work Plan. The report will compare accomplishments to those activities identified in the associated Work Plan for the year. An evaluation of the various activities undertaken will be incorporated to provide guidance on successful activities and how other activities might be modified or adapted to improve results. Relevant reports or other products developed during the previous year will also be included as part of the annual report.

### **3.5 IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK**

The FISH Team has created two documents that together establish the FISH Team and describe how the FISH Team is organized. The Procedures document established the various components that comprise the FISH Team and describes the responsibilities of these components. Established components include the Executive Committee which guides the FISH Team, the Technical Review Committee which will provide technical assistance and conduct restoration project screening, and the FISH Team which is the public forum for all participants. The Purpose document describes the composition of each component, presents the responsibilities of each, and discusses how they interact. In addition, the Procedures document allows for the creation of additional work groups as needed. Currently, a FISH Team Coordinator has also been hired to undertake administration and coordination activities for the FISH Team. A description of how the

organization structure of the FISH Team was developed and a copy of the Procedures document is provided in Appendix A.

In addition to the Procedures document, the FISH Team has developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that establishes the group. The purpose of the MOU is to provide stability to the FISH Team by establishing, through signing the MOU, the core group of participants in the FISH Team process. Signatories to the MOU are eligible to participate in the Executive Committee as outlined in the Procedures document. Signing the MOU is not required for participation, however, signature is required to be eligible to vote for and/or sit on the Executive Committee. Participants can sign the MOU at any time. A copy of the MOU is provided in Appendix A as is a current list of those participating in the FISH Team process.

- Busby, P.J., T.C. Wainwright, G.J. Bryant, L. Lierheimer, R.S. Waples, R.W. Waknitz, and I.V. Lagomarsino. 1996. Status review of west coast steelhead from Washington, Idaho, Oregon, and California. U.S. Dep. Commer., NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS-NWFSC-27, 261 p.
- FishNet 4C. 2000. Fishery Network of Central California Coastal Counties 2000-2001 Work Plan. November 27, 2000.
- McEwan D. and T. A. Jackson, 1996. Steelhead restoration and management plan for California. State of California, The Resources Agency, Department of Fish and Game.
- Titus, R.G., D.C. Erman, and W.M. Snider. *In Press*. History and status of steelhead in California coastal drainages south of San Francisco. Manuscript, April 26, 2001.

APPENDIX A

TRI-COUNTY FISH TEAM

ORGIANIZATION AND PARTICIPATION

## **1.0 DEVELOPMENT OF THE ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE**

The Tri-County FISH Team (FISH Team) began to organize in 2000. It was clear that some sort of organizational structure would need to be established for the group to function successfully. At that point, the members discussed potential organization types and ultimately decided, via consensus, to create a governing Executive Committee (EC). A nine-member executive committee was established with three representatives from each county, representing three different types of organizations: local government, local sponsoring agencies, and public groups. Local government agencies represent city and county government agencies within the three counties in the group's region. Sponsoring agencies are special districts that have a financial obligation to the administration and support of the FISH Team. Public members include all other groups that would like to participate in the process. The representation on the EC was designed to provide both a geographic balance within the region and a balance among the types of participants. The latter was especially important because the range of groups participating in the FISH Team often have differing view of restoration and funding issues.

During the initial formation, it was clear that a structure needed to be put in place so that the group could begin to function and begin to lay out future goals and strategies. Therefore, the members of the EC were appointed by the original participants in the process. These appointments were made with the intent that, once the group was established, the EC seats would be elected, rather than appointed. The first set of elections are scheduled to be held in spring of this year.

The EC provided the FISH Team with a guiding force to provide direction. The EC understood that it would be important to provide a more solid basis for the organization and management of the FISH Team and therefore began developing the group's Purpose and Procedures ("Procedures document"). This document outlines the goals of the FISH Team, how the EC members are elected, methods for interaction with the broader group, and roles and responsibilities within the group. The Procedures document is provided later in this appendix.

More recently, the EC has responded to the needs of the group to solidify its membership by more firmly establishing the active participants within the FISH Team. Therefore the EC developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to formalize the FISH Team and establish the Cooperating Members of the group. The intent of the MOU was not to exclude any group from participating in the process, but rather, to solidify participation in the FISH Team process. Non-signatories are welcome to participate in the quarterly meetings of the FISH Team, provide comments, and receive information through the email group. However, only signatories to the MOU are eligible to nominate and vote for members of the FISH Team EC. The initial round of signatures to the MOU will be

complete by spring of 2002. Additional participants may sign the MOU at any time in the future.

Both the Procedures document and the MOU were developed by the EC with the assistance of the FISH Team's coordinator. Each document was provided to the FISH Team participants via the email distribution list and at a quarterly meeting at which comments on the document were received and discussed. Two rounds of public review and comment were provided on each document. Ultimately, approval of the final document occurred at the EC level, as outlined in the Procedures document. Both documents were approved by a consensus within the EC.

The Procedures document and the MOU provide the basis for organization and operation of the FISH Team. Because of the large diversity of participants within the FISH Team, and the consensus-based process the FISH Team operates within, development and approval of these documents was fairly slow. Now that the organization has been established and the initial round of MOU signatures is nearly complete, the FISH Team is ready to begin to tackle some of the more difficult issues facing the region. The Implementation Plan provides a foundation for the achieving the goals and objectives of the FISH Team.

## **2.0 PARTICIPATION IN THE TRI-COUNTY FISH TEAM**

The founding members of the FISH Team were local government agencies and special districts (primarily water districts) that had an interest in salmonid restoration in the tri-county area. Outreach has occurred numerous times to broaden the participation within the FISH Team. A broad stakeholder group is necessary so that it better covers the many agencies and organizations who are involved in salmonid restoration activities in the tri-county area. Table A-1 provides a list of those who are currently participating in the FISH Team. Participants in the FISH Team are defined as those who have attended one or more meetings and expressed interest in continuing to be part of the FISH Team effort.

The FISH Team has conducted several outreach efforts to inform those working on steelhead restoration issues within the San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura counties about the FISH Team. Initial outreach efforts were primarily by word-of-mouth. The original participants in the FISH Team contacted those agencies and organizations that they knew of that were involved in steelhead restoration or had the ability to affect steelhead restoration. Such outreach efforts continue.

More recently, a formal outreach letter was distributed to many agencies and organizations within the tri-county area. The FISH Team Coordinator solicited the names of agencies and organizations that should be contacted from the FISH Team participants. The letter explained briefly who the FISH Team is, the group's goals, and what it intended to do in the future. The letter also invited the addressee to an upcoming meeting to find out more about the FISH Team. Several groups responded to this outreach letter and attended the meeting or expressed interest in being kept informed so that they could participate in the future. Still others have asked to be kept on the contact list to track the group's activities, but have not yet begun active participation in the FISH

**Table A-1. Current Participants in the Tri-County FISH Team**

| <b><u>San Luis Obispo County</u></b>  | <b><u>FISH Team Category</u></b> |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Cambria Community Services District   | Sponsoring Agency                |
| City of San Luis Obispo   | Local Government Agency          |
| Central Coast Salmon Enhancement  | Public Member                    |
| Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District   | Public Member                    |
| County of San Luis Obispo   | Local Government Agency          |
| Greenspace, The Cambria Land Trust  | Public Member                    |
| Steelhead & Stream Recovery Coalition of the South<br>Central California Coast  | Public Member                    |
| <b><u>Santa Barbara County</u></b>  |                                  |
| Cachuma Conservation Release Board (City of Santa<br>Barbara, Carpinteria Valley Water District,<br>Goleta Water District, Montecito Water<br>District) | Sponsoring Agency                |
| Cachuma Resource Conservation District  | Public Member                    |
| City of Carpinteria   | Local Government Agency          |
| City of Santa Barbara   | Local Government Agency          |
| Conception Coast Project  | Public Member                    |
| County of Santa Barbara   | Local Government Agency          |
| Santa Barbara County Fish & Game Commission   | Public Member                    |
| Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District,<br>Improvement Dist. No. 1  | Sponsoring Agency                |
| <b><u>Ventura County</u></b>  |                                  |
| Casitas Municipal Water District  | Sponsoring Agency                |
| City of Ventura   | Local Government Agency          |
| County of Ventura   | Local Government Agency          |
| Matilija Coalition  | Public Member                    |
| Ojai Valley Land Conservancy  | Public Member                    |
| Ojai Valley Sanitary District   | Sponsoring Agency                |
| Surfrider Foundation, Ventura County Chapter  | Public Member                    |
| United Water Conservation District  | Sponsoring Agency                |
| <b><u>State/Regional</u></b>  |                                  |
| California Department of Fish and Game  | State Resource Agency            |
| National Marine Fisheries Service   | Federal Resource Agency          |
| U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  | Federal Resource Agency          |
| California Conservation Corps   | Public Member                    |
| California Native Plant Society   | Public Member                    |
| California Trout  | Public Member                    |
| For the Sake of the Salmon  | Public Member                    |
| Santa Barbara ChannelKeepers  | Public Member                    |

Team. Continued outreach to these latter potential participants, and others, will be a component of FISH Team activities.

Through these efforts the FISH Team has been able to develop a working relationship with a large number of stakeholders within the tri-county region. This broad base will allow the FISH Team to be more effective in the coming years as the group moves out of the start-up and organizational phase and begins to be an effective regional coordinator for steelhead restoration.

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
AMONG THE COOPERATIVE MEMBERS OF THE  
TRI-COUNTY F.I.S.H. TEAM FOR THE  
ATTAINMENT OF FEDERAL AND STATE FUNDING FOR THE  
RECOVERY OF PACIFIC COAST SALMON AND STEELHEAD**

This MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING is entered into by and between the local government agencies, sponsoring agencies, and non-governmental organizations within San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura counties listed in Attachment A and hereinafter collectively referred to as "COOPERATING MEMBERS".

**WHEREAS**, the decline of salmon and steelhead populations along the Pacific Coast region from California to Alaska over the last decade has led to their listing by National Marine Fisheries Service of salmonid populations as "threatened" or "endangered", pursuant to the Endangered Species Act; and

**WHEREAS**, numerous watersheds that are tributaries to the Pacific Ocean are subject to these listings; and

**WHEREAS**, for a number of years, state and federal funding for salmon and steelhead restoration has focussed on north-central and northern California; and

**WHEREAS**, the California Department of Fish and Game has conducted a statewide assessment of the steelhead population, and concluded the southern steelhead stocks (South of San Francisco Bay) are the most jeopardized of all the California's steelhead populations; and

**WHEREAS**, the COOPERATING MEMBERS share common interest to improve salmonid habitat conditions and to implement restoration work that promotes long-term recovery of naturally-spawned salmonid populations; and

**WHEREAS**, local funding resources are limited; and

**WHEREAS**, the COOPERATING MEMBERS formed the **Tri-County F.I.S.H. Team** (Funding for Improved Salmonid Habitat) to work with federal, state and local agencies and groups to secure funding for the recovery of Pacific coastal salmon and steelhead trout to the tri-county area; and

**WHEREAS**, the **Tri-County F.I.S.H. Team** is formed in accordance with the "Purpose and Procedures" document set forth in Attachment B and as they may be revised from time to time as set forth pursuant to the Purpose and Procedures document.

**NOW, THEREFORE**, the COOPERATING MEMBERS agree to work together as the **Tri-County F.I.S.H. Team** in good faith and in a cooperative manner to seek funding and

additional means for the recovery of Pacific Coast salmon and steelhead in the tri-county area as follows:

1. To maintain group membership open to those interested in participating in the development and implementation of restoration plans and projects within the tri-county area, and
2. To provide the most complete picture of the actions that are occurring with the region and to coordinate those actions to the benefit of the salmon and steelhead restoration, and
3. To work with other regional groups, federal and state agencies, and other organizations to secure resources for projects in the tri-county area;
4. To develop an annual regional project plan; and
5. To focus efforts on those projects which improve habitat conditions and migratory access for naturally-spawned salmonid populations; and
6. To bear their respective expenses with regard to project specific funding acquisition activities sponsored by individual agencies/organizations under this MOU; and
7. To seek grant funding to hire consultants to provide coordination and technical assistance to the COOPERATING MEMBERS; and
8. To maintain a minimum level of administrative support should grant funding be unavailable, each county's local government and sponsoring agency participants shall commit to funding up to \$15,000 per county (\$45,000 total) with the proportion between agencies within each county determined within each county group.

Any signatories to the MOU may terminate their participation in this MOU with 30 days written notification to the Tri-County F.I.S.H. Team Coordinator.

Any local government or sponsoring agency terminating participation which later wishes to participate in this MOU shall first make payment of any funding due from such party at the time of its termination, and also pay its share of any obligations, costs and expenses for which it otherwise would have been obligated absent such termination, as determined by the local government and sponsoring agency participants from the county of such party which provided such funding.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, the COOPERATING MEMBERS hereto have executed this MOU effective on the dates provided hereof. This MOU may be executed in one or more counterparts and each counterpart shall be evidence of participation by all signatories.

AGENCY/ORGANIZATION: \_\_\_\_\_

CATEGORY: Local Government Agency; Sponsoring Agency; Public Member

BY: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME/POSITION

Tri-County F.I.S.H. Team  
(Funding for Improved Salmonid Habitat)

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## **Purpose and Procedures**

### **1. Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of the Tri-County F.I.S.H. Team is to work with federal, state, and local agencies and non-governmental groups to

- secure funding in support of salmonid recovery and habitat enhancement,
- improve information about restoration and recovery activities, and
- enhance public understanding and support for such actions

in the tri-county area. To succeed at this goal, the Tri-County F.I.S.H. Team will coordinate with local groups to develop a regional approach. This will result in an Regional Restoration Projects Plan for the tri-county area (San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties).

### **2. Regional Needs Assessment**

For a number of years, state and federal funding for salmonid restoration has been focussed on north-central and northern California. In these areas, local entities have formed regional groups (FishNet 4C and the 5 Northern Counties) to speak on behalf of local funding needs and projects. State and Federal agencies work with these regional groups more frequently than the many, smaller, local agencies and groups. Prior to the formation of the Tri-County F.I.S.H. Team, there were no corresponding regional groups to the south with a similar purpose. The Tri-County F.I.S.H. Team incorporates three coastal counties (San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura) into such a regional group.

The purpose of the F.I.S.H. Team is to act as a regional voice to draw state and federal resources to the tri-county area in support of fishery restoration projects, to improve information about restoration activities, and to enhance public understanding of fishery issues. The tri-county area has federally listed threatened (south central coast steelhead) and endangered (southern California steelhead) salmonid species. In order to facilitate the restoration and recovery of these species and other species and their habitat, the F.I.S.H. Team will coordinate local restoration efforts at a regional level (the tri-county area). The F.I.S.H. Team understands that restoration will occur at a local level, and that a regional voice will provide weight to funding and assistance requests to support these efforts. The F.I.S.H. Team also recognizes that fishery enhancement projects do not stop at the county lines. To this end, the F.I.S.H. Team will collaborate with the other local, regional, state and federal groups and agencies, as needed to facilitate fishery restoration actions.

The California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) has conducted a statewide assessment of the steelhead populations. According to the *Steelhead Restoration and Management Plan for California* (McEwan & Jackson, 1996), "southern steelhead stocks are the most jeopardized of all of California's steelhead populations" [note that here "southern steelhead" refers to those occurring south of San Francisco Bay]. According to this DFG document, of the steelhead streams south of San Francisco, 47% have reduced production from historical levels and 33% no longer have steelhead populations. Restoration of these populations should be a high priority.

A number of needs for successful fish restoration efforts have been identified within the tri-county area that includes San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura counties. Needs in the tri-county area include (but are not limited to) the following:

- (1) identification and coordination of local restoration and enhancement efforts,
- (2) additional funding resources for restoration efforts;
- (3) creation of a resource for sharing information among restoration/recovery agencies and organizations,
- (4) increased public awareness and support for fishery restoration,
- (5) organization of scientific information on the fishery and on restoration project success, and
- (6) development a recovery plan for the salmonid species in the area.

The Tri-County F.I.S.H. Team will attempt to address some of these needs and will be a resource in the region to the DFG and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) as they address these items. Finally, the F.I.S.H. Team acknowledges the efforts of DFG, NMFS, and the California Resources Agency in establishing priorities for funding and will work closely with them to ensure that regional projects fit these priorities.

### **3. Organization Procedures**

The Tri-County F.I.S.H. Team is open to all in the tri-county area interested in participating. Participation of agencies and groups that develop and implement restoration plans and projects is especially desired because it will provide the F.I.S.H. Team with the most complete picture of the actions that are occurring within the region. The meetings of the F.I.S.H. Team are open to the public and any interested parties. The F.I.S.H. Team has created an Executive Committee to provide guidance and direction for the group's activities; a Technical Review Committee to review regional restoration proposals; and holds meetings to which all participants and the public are invited (Public Forum). The F.I.S.H. Team, through a grant with the California Resources Agency, has hired consultants to provide coordination and technical assistance to the F.I.S.H. Team.

An MOU formally establishing the Tri-County F.I.S.H. Team is in progress and will cite this document as describing the operating procedures of the group. Finally, attached is a schematic diagram of the organization structure for the Tri-County F.I.S.H. Team.

## **Executive Committee**

### Responsibilities

An Executive Committee has been established to provide guidance and direction for the F.I.S.H. Team's activities. The Executive Committee will work within the budget established under the funding provisions outlined in the Tri-County F.I.S.H. Team MOU. Their responsibilities are to:

- Determine the need for F.I.S.H. Team meetings and set dates/times;
- Establish meeting topics and agenda items;
- Review and provide comment on consultant deliverables as needed;
- Provide direction to the Technical Review Committee;
- Compose letters to federal and state agencies in support of projects;
- Guide the development of the Regional Restoration Projects Plan and updates to the plan;
- Review the Purpose and Procedures document annually and make changes as appropriate;
- Seek additional funding for the activities of the Tri-County F.I.S.H. Team;
- Work to ensure that fishery restoration grant monies continue to be available;
- Develop additional work plans as needed;
- Work with contractors to provide the necessary organizational and technical support for the F.I.S.H. Team;
- Review, comment, and forward deliverables to the F.I.S.H. Team for discussion; and
- Provide the final vote on group actions where consensus can not be reached in the F.I.S.H. Team.

### Composition

The Executive Committee is composed of one local government representative, one local sponsoring agency representative, and one public representative from each of the three counties (San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Ventura) represented by the regional group (9 total). The local government representative may come from any division that deals in some way with fishery issues within city or county government. The 'sponsoring agencies' are local agencies with existing fisheries and habitat improvement interests. The public member can be anyone that participates in fishery restoration and recovery activities within that county.

The Tri-County F.I.S.H. Team has established a coordinator to organize and conduct meetings. The coordinator and Executive Committee members may attend additional functions as necessary to provide information to the F.I.S.H. Team. The coordinator also attends Executive Committee meetings.

Other people can be invited to attend Executive Committee meetings as deemed necessary by the Committee.

### Election

During the early formation of the Tri-County F.I.S.H. Team, representatives were appointed by the group participants in the individual counties to fill each of the three positions for each county.

In the future, county representatives to fill the categories described above will be elected by a vote of the group participants from each county and category. For example, nominations for the Local Government Representative from Ventura County will be taken from people who work for Ventura Local Governments and participate in the Tri-County F.I.S.H. Team. Those that get to vote on the nominees for this category fit the same description, namely they are participants in the F.I.S.H. Team who also work for Local Governments in Ventura County.

Each organization/agency that has participated in at least half of the F.I.S.H. Team meetings throughout the previous year and has signed the MOU will be eligible to nominate a person to fill a representative position and will receive one vote to elect the representative from among the nominees. The positions will come up for a vote at the first F.I.S.H. Team meeting held in the fourth quarter (i.e. October through December).

### Decision Making

Wherever possible, decisions within the Executive Committee will be made via consensus. However, where consensus can not be reached, then the voting procedures are as follows:

- Only the 9 county representatives (3 from each county, one in each of the following categories: Local Government Agency, Local Sponsoring Agency, and Public Member) are voting members of the Executive Committee.
- At least 2 representatives from each of the 3 counties must vote for the action item in order for it to pass.

The Executive Committee provides a balanced forum in which to provide final approval for deliverables. The Tri-County F.I.S.H. Team includes any and all who wish to participate in the process. Because of this nature, the larger group is unlikely to have balanced participation between the three counties. As with the all of the decisions to be made by the F.I.S.H. Team and its Committees, all

attempts will be made to work by consensus. Where consensus can not be reached, the Executive Committee will have the final vote after a full opportunity for comment, review, and revision has been made in the F.I.S.H. Team forum. Administrative decisions regarding the Tri-County F.I.S.H. Team's budget will be made as noted in the MOU and the Executive Committee will work within the budget provided for under the MOU.

## **Technical Review Committee**

### Responsibilities

The Technical Review Committee (TRC) is tasked with technical review of the proposed projects. This committee will evaluate projects for (1) technical merit, (2) feasibility, and (3) benefit to the fish. The purpose of this committee is to provide an independent body to conduct the prioritization of the proposed projects. The results of the committee's technical prioritization will provide the foundation for the Regional Restoration Projects Plan that will be developed under the direction of the Executive Committee, and future updates to the plan.

### Composition & Selection

All of the committee members must have a technical background that will allow them to critically review the proposed projects. Selections for the TRC will be made by the same 9 groups that are eligible to elect the Executive Committee county representatives: the Local Government Agencies, the Local Sponsoring Agencies, and the Public Members from each of the three counties. The difference for the TRC, is that the person selected by those in the county/category group to represent them does not have to come from that county/category. For example, the group participants that are Local Governments from Ventura County can select a fisheries biologist who works in the Central Valley (or anywhere else) to be their representative if they so choose. Selection for the county participants in the TRC will occur annually at the same time that the Executive Committee representatives are elected.

In addition to the 9 representatives selected to represent the three counties, state and federal agencies will be invited to provide technical expertise. Participation from the California Resources Agency (e.g. DFG), NMFS, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be sought. More than one representative from each agency may participate in order to provide representation familiar with the different geographic areas covered by the Regional Group.

The committee can request additional technical expertise as necessary for their review. Voting representatives from the Executive Committee can not sit on the Technical Review Committee.

### Decision Making

The TRC will work by consensus. The TRC will develop proposed methods for technical prioritization of projects working with existing prioritization methods employed by various granting entities. The TRC will forward to the Executive Committee and F.I.S.H. Team a description of the proposed prioritization methods for review and comment. Once the methods have been approved by the Executive Committee, the prioritization will be applied to the Regional Restoration Projects List and the TRC will forward to the F.I.S.H. Team a list of technically sound projects. Updates to the Restoration Projects plan will be made as needed based on new information and projects.

### **Coordination & Technical Assistance**

Currently, ENTRIX, Inc. is under contract to the City of Santa Barbara and the California Resources Agency to assist the Executive Committee and the F.I.S.H. Team in the development of the first Regional Restoration Projects Plan.

### **4. Tri-County F.I.S.H. Team Responsibilities**

The responsibilities of the F.I.S.H. Team include the following:

- To work with other regional groups, federal and state agencies, and other organizations to (1) secure funding for salmonid recovery and habitat enhancement projects in the tri-county area, (2) to improve information about restoration and recovery activities, and (3) to enhance public understanding and support for restoration actions/projects.
- To coordinate with the local entities and groups which develop and implement restoration projects. The F.I.S.H. Team will be responsible for outreach to these local entities and to develop a F.I.S.H. Team that can appropriately develop a regional projects plan.
- To use the region's needs and this coordinated, regional effort to create additional funding opportunities at the local, state, and federal level.
- To work with the appropriate entities to direct more state and federal funding to the southern part of the state. This will include providing input to granting agencies on changes needed to re-balance the historical Northern California bias in the funding processes.

APPENDIX B

TRI-COUNTY FISH TEAM

RESTORATION PROJECT PRIORITIZATION PROCESS

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

One of the original goals of forming the regional group in the tri-county area was to have the group provide guidance to the State Resources Agency and other funding agencies regarding important steelhead restoration projects in the area. At the time, local Resources Agency staffing levels were very low and insufficient to provide the necessary guidance through internal channels. Staffing levels continue to remain below the level needed and therefore the need for this activity continues. This section outlines a component of the strategy for achieving this particular function for the Tri-County FISH Team (FISH Team) that responds to FISH Team objective number three.

Presented here is a process by which projects within the tri-county area will be reviewed, at the regional level, to provide recommendations to funding agencies about local priorities. The prioritization process has been modeled after the processes used by DFG in the Fishery Restoration Grants Program and the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project and the priorities established by DFG in the *Steelhead Restoration and Management Plan for California* (McEwan and Jackson, 1996). Significant changes were made this spring to the DFG evaluation program therefore it is clear that the FISH Team will need to revisit the process to ensure that it reflects the goals and objectives of the FISH Team participants and current conditions. Changes in the amount of funding, the types of work that can be funded, identification of regional and watershed-level steelhead restoration needs, public support, local, state, and federal regulations, and other factors will result in the need to re-evaluate the process outlined below.

## **2.0 FRAMEWORK FOR RESTORATION PROJECT COORDINATION**

The framework for coordination and evaluation of local restoration projects at the regional level is outlined in this section and involves interaction among components of the FISH Team as established in the Purpose document (see Appendix A).

### **2.1 TECHNICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE**

Early on in the process of developing how project-level screening may occur, it became clear that an independent body was needed to assist in this process. The stakeholders in the FISH Team come from numerous backgrounds and represent views of steelhead restoration and management that are often very different. These stakeholders represent those, primarily governmental agencies or special districts, whose missions are unrelated to steelhead restoration but have the ability to directly affect these species depending on how their missions (e.g. road maintenance, flood control, water development) are carried out. FISH Team stakeholders also include those, primarily non-governmental agencies, whose purpose is to foster recovery of the local steelhead resources through a variety of means. Thus, the stakeholders in the FISH Team often find themselves on opposite ends of the table during planning processes related to steelhead. The FISH Team

acknowledges that steelhead restoration will be more effective if the different views of this variety of stakeholders are heard in a single forum and that a regional voice is more effective in many forums than each independent voice.

Therefore, it was considered important that any screening or prioritization occur within a separate, technically oriented, body that would not be as directly influenced by the varying political views about steelhead restoration. It was also recognized, however, that this independent entity needed to have a balanced geographic distribution. Thus, it was decided that nine members would sit on what has come to be called the Technical Review Committee (TRC) and that these nine seats would be appointed by the same nine categories that sit on the FISH Team's Executive Committee (EC) (see the Purpose document in Appendix A). The TRC will work closely with local resource agency staff to provide additional information for project and proposal evaluation and such staff will be invited to participate in the TRC.

The TRC is tasked with re-evaluating the screening method periodically to determine if the method continues to compliment the evaluation methods for the key funding sources, with conducting the initial screening review, and with providing comments on the proposal itself to assess if it is well written and adequately conveys the important information.

## 2.2 FISH TEAM PUBLIC FORUM

As outlined in the Procedures document for the FISH Team, the TRC is an independent body charged with the technical review of local restoration projects. However, factors beyond biological benefit and technical merit are important in considering which projects will be successful in receiving grant funding. Therefore, once the initial screening has been conducted by the TRC, the EC and FISH Team will review the list and provide additional information that can be used in making final priority assignments. The preliminary prioritized list will be provided to the EC and Public Forum for review and comment. Based on this input, the EC will revise the list and through one or more iterations of review and comment, generate a final list for that year.

## 3.0 PROJECT SCREENING & PRIORITIZATION

This section presents a more detailed view of what would be considered during the screening process based on the existing funding conditions and regional needs. There are many existing funding sources that are either designed to fund salmonid restoration projects or that can be used to target specific problems that affect steelhead. Each of these funding sources has different amounts of money to be allocated each year, different proposal formats and requirements, different types of projects that can be funded, and different implementation time periods. The screening method employed by the FISH Team needs to comply with and compliment those used by the various funding agencies.

The proposed project prioritization process incorporates two steps that combine to determine the overall recommendations for funding by the FISH Team. The FISH Team acknowledges that there are a number of different project categories that can foster

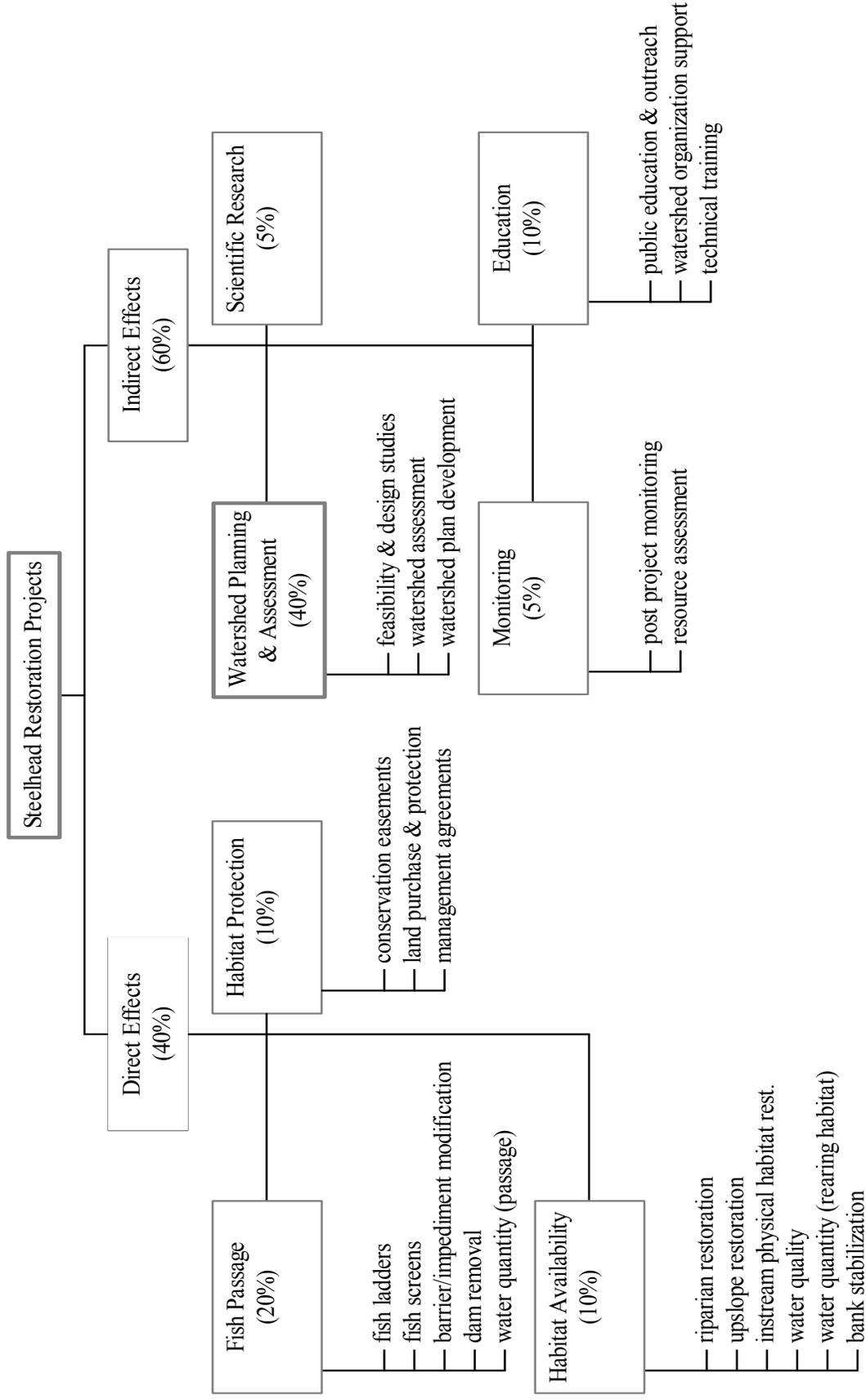
steelhead restoration. In addition, each project category can further be subdivided into specific types of projects. Further, the FISH Team understands the need for projects to fit within an overall planning effort at some level as a method for understanding the likely biological benefit resulting from the proposed action but, acknowledges that many south-central California coast watersheds lack watershed plans. Therefore, in developing the project prioritization method for the FISH Team, it is appropriate that screening occur at two different levels (project category and project type) and be adaptable within the FISH Team framework discussed above.

### 3.1 PROJECT-SPECIFIC PRIORITIZATION (LEVEL I)

The TRC is tasked with screening the proposed steelhead enhancement projects for biological benefit, technical soundness, and feasibility. The TRC will use modified versions of the scoring criteria used by DFG in their Fishery Restoration Grants program as a way to provide a basis for comparing the technical soundness and biological benefit of proposed projects. As this report goes to press, revised scoring sheets have been produced by DFG but not yet reviewed by the FISH Team. Therefore, the TRC will review the revised scoring sheets and develop an appropriate method for prioritizing projects at the project-type level. Scoring will consider the limiting factors addressed by a project, the amount of the watershed covered in planning and assessment projects, qualifications of the project proponent, whether the proposed projects are technically sound (e.g. proposed fish passage design will work) and likely to be durable, the timing of project implementation, local support, recommendation in a watershed plan, cost, and biological benefit.

Where possible, the TRC will attempt to quantify the benefit to the resource based on the proposed project. For example, instream habitat enhancement or fish passage projects allow the length of stream affected to be quantified. For watershed planning or coordination efforts, the amount of area to be included in the effort will be estimated. Research projects that are designed to provide further information on how to manage steelhead resources do not lend themselves well to quantification of biological benefit. Therefore, in such cases a more qualitative ranking (e.g. scale from 1 to 10) will be provided based on the knowledge and experience of the TRC members.

The TRC will organize the proposed projects based on the type of as outlined in Figure B-1. These project types are similar to those used in the DFG Fishery Restoration Grant Program, but have been expanded to include a few additional categories to more fully represent the types of projects that can enhance steelhead and can be funded through the wide variety of funding sources. Some additional categories include “dam removal” (a breakdown of the DFG “Instream Barrier Modification”), “water quality”, and “water quantity”. The TRC will work with projects at the “project type” level and will rank the projects, based on the evaluation criteria described above. It is difficult to compare projects to the level of detail where each is assigned a specific rank relative to the other projects. However, it is important to provide guidance to funding agencies beyond a list of projects that are well developed and are likely to have some biological benefit. Therefore, the TRC will prioritize the scored projects into the five priority levels using the guidance provided in Table B-1.



**Figure B-1. Summary of Steelhead Restoration Project Types (Level I) and Project Categories (Level II)**

**Table B-1. Identification of Project Type Priorities**

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| First Priority     | High scoring projects that can be implemented in this year or next.   |
| Second Priority    | High scoring projects that will be ready for implementation 3 or more years out or Moderately scoring projects.   |
| Third Priority     | Moderately scoring projects that are 3 or more years before implementation or Low scoring projects.   |
| Potential Priority | This tier represents good project ideas but proposals that need work to be successful. Revisions to the proposal would result in the project being re-classified. |
| Not a Priority     | Poor project design or low potential biological benefit.  |

The priority level for a particular project/proposal will vary depending on the overall priority for the category the project falls under as described in Section 3.2. Projects in Tiers 4 or 5 would be likely candidates for additional technical or grant writing assistance to improve project design or proposal development.

### 3.2 PROJECT CATEGORY-LEVEL SCREENING (LEVEL II)

Steelhead enhancement projects can take on a number of forms. Many projects have a direct effect on the quantity or quality of steelhead habitat at or near the site where the project was implemented. Such “on-the-ground” projects typically fall into one of three categories: fish passage (e.g. fishways, barrier removal, and fish screens), habitat availability (e.g. in-channel habitat work, riparian restoration, upslope restoration), or habitat protection (e.g. purchase of land or conservation easements). In addition to projects with a more direct benefit to steelhead habitat, there are several types of projects that can result in in-direct benefits. Examples of indirect project types include monitoring, watershed assessment and planning, public education and outreach, and scientific research. These seven areas are the “project categories” used in the Level II component of the evaluation process (see Figure B-1). Different regions and counties are at different levels within these project categories and therefore, for successful regional restoration project planning, the appropriate mix of these project types must be considered.

At Level II in the process, some project categories are given more weight than others. Thus, in a more heavily weighted project category (i.e. higher percentage in Figure B-1), more projects would be recommended for funding than in a project category with a lower weight. This structure results in the needed balance between project categories. Within a project category, individual projects are ranked as noted above in Level I of the process so that in all project categories, projects that rank more highly are those recommended for funding.

The “weighting” of different project categories will vary between years as needs, funding sources, and conditions change within the tri-county area. Initially, the weighting among project categories has been determined based on the region’s assessment within the State’s steelhead

management plan (McEwan and Jackson, 1996). Each year, the TRC will review the weighting of the project categories to determine if changes are warranted.

The *Steelhead Restoration and Management Plan for California* (McEwan and Jackson, 1996) states that the two key objectives for managing southern steelhead are to (1) “halt declines and increase populations” and (2) “resource assessment.” In order to meet these objectives, the following goals are set forth:

- “Protect spawning and rearing areas, including estuaries.
- Remove and/or modify barriers to migration.
- Restore streamflows.
- Reintroduce fish into stream where the run has been extirpated, using the most genetically similar donor populations.
- Increase populations to levels that will support angler use.
- Identify specific problem sites.
- Assess population status.”

The State’s recommendations such as reintroduction of fish and increasing population levels are not categories considered in the FISH Team process as they are best left in the realm of the resource agencies as many scientific, technical, and policy issues must be resolved before this type of work can begin in earnest. The remaining recommendations included in the State’s steelhead management plan focus on several areas: (1) protecting existing habitat, (2) removing passage barriers, (3) improving habitat availability through water quantity, and (4) watershed assessments that lead to management recommendations. Therefore, of the seven project categories outlined by the FISH Team (Figure B-1), four are considered to be of greater importance based on the state steelhead management plan (Habitat Protection, Habitat Availability [specifically water quantity], Fish Passage, and Planning & Assessment). These four areas have therefore been given greater weight in the Level II process. This weighting is also consistent with the regional needs evaluation and with observations of the types of projects that were submitted for funding under the 2001 DFG Fishery Restoration Grants Program. Based on recent proposal years, relatively few on-the-ground projects are ready to go. Planning and assessment projects and public education and outreach projects dominated last year’s submittals from the tri-county area. Such efforts are important in this region as a means to generate the information, resources, and access necessary to develop and implement projects that directly benefit steelhead.

Level I allows for the FISH Team to assess the type of projects needed in the region and focus funding recommendations in these core areas. In the short-term, the prioritization calls for some resources to be expended across all Level I categories in an effort to recognize that needs exist across the board and the need to maintain a balanced restoration program. However, planning and assessment is heavily weighted due to the great need that currently exists in this project category in the tri-county region. As more of the groundwork is laid, it is anticipated that in the longer term, more resources will need to be directed to projects that have a direct benefit on steelhead resources and habitat and monitoring.