

Regional Water Quality Control Board
North Coast Region

Executive Officer's Summary Report
Thursday, June 19, 2014
Regional Water Board Office
Santa Rosa, California

ITEM: 7

SUBJECT: Update on the Wood for Salmon Working Group (Jonathan Warmerdam)

BOARD ACTION: This item is an informational update. No action will be taken by the Regional Board.

BACKGROUND: Formed in 2010, the *Wood for Salmon Working Group* brings together state and federal regulatory agencies, environmental non-profits, non-governmental agencies, and stakeholders, to develop a clear understanding of the regulatory permitting pathways for salmonid habitat restoration projects involving wood placement; identify potential mechanisms to simplify, improve upon, and incentivize implementation of more projects; and systematically confront the obstacles that prevent these projects from occurring.

For more than a million years, anadromous salmonids thrived in streams and rivers loaded with trees and root wads. But over the past 150 years, most of California's conifer forests were logged and streams were cleared of large woody material. What now remains are young, recovering forests, streams lacking sufficient habitat, and salmon populations on the brink of extinction. State and federal recovery plans for endangered salmonids highlight the need to reintroduce wood back into streams *now*, rather than wait for riparian forests to mature and begin naturally supplying fallen trees on their own – a process which could take decades or centuries.

Born out of this need, the *Wood for Salmon Working Group* has been evaluating and improving the permitting process, coordinating agency requirements, reducing fees and “red tape”, developing guidance and tools, conducting outreach and training, and securing funding assistance. Additionally, the *Wood for Salmon Working Group* has been supporting and funding innovative, cost-effective restoration techniques, including a method now known as “*accelerated recruitment*” or “*stream seeding*”, in which long stream segments are treated through the reintroduction of whole trees.

The *Wood for Salmon Working Group* includes representatives from the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, CAL FIRE, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Geologic Survey, NOAA-National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alnus Ecological Consulting, Campbell Global, Mendocino County Resource Conservation District, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Sustainable Conservation, The Nature Conservancy, and University of California Cooperative Extension.

Staff's presentation will provide an overview of the recent activities of the Wood for Salmon Working Group. The presentation will initiate a conversation about the role of the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board in promoting restoration projects in the North Coast.