

March 6, 2012

Trinity River Community Members,

Thank You for attending the meeting at the North Fork Grange in early December, the first of many public outreach meetings discussing the Trinity River.

The Junction City meeting was the first and a bit of a test run. Your questions, and the attached answers, will serve as a foundation for future conversations with other Trinity River community members. We apologize for the delay in our response to your questions. We believe our response time in the future will shorten and, if these same questions arise in another community meeting, they will be easier to answer.

One important matter that we would like to highlight in this cover letter regards the status of the upcoming "Upper Junction City" project that is currently in the environmental review process. If you are interested in reviewing and/or commenting on this project, we have included information here as well as within the attached document.

The Trinity River Restoration Program has provided answers to your questions in the attached document. Please feel free to contact TRRP if you need any additional clarification. If there are other issues that are not within the authority of the TRRP, the Trinity County Resource Conservation District staff is also available to assist you in getting questions answered / issues resolved.

We will be coming back to Junction City sometime in April to discuss these responses with you and document additional questions you may have. You will be notified a few weeks prior with a date, time and location.

Many thanks again for your participation. You are making a difference.

Alex, Jeff and Donna
Trinity County Resource Conservation District
www.tcrpd.net
(530) 623 – 6004

Upper Junction City Project -

Draft Environmental Assessment / Impact Statement available for public review and comment

The Draft EA/IS may be reviewed in Weaverville at the Trinity County Library at 211 Main Street, Weaverville, CA; the TRRP office at 1313 S Main Street, Weaverville, CA; and the Trinity County Resource Conservation District at Horseshoe Lane, Weaverville, CA.

The Draft EA/IS may also be viewed at the Bureau of Land Management office at 355 Hemsted Drive, Redding, CA. The document is also available on the TRRP website, <http://www.trrp.net/> and http://www.usbr.gov/mp/nepa/nepa_projdetails.cfm?Project_ID=8963.

For additional information or to request a copy of the Draft EA/IS please contact the TRRP office.

Comments must be received by close of business Tuesday, March 20, 2012, and should be sent to Mr. Gutermuth, Trinity River Restoration Program, P.O. Box 1300, Weaverville, CA 96093 or bgutermuth@usbr.gov.

Answers to Community Questions

2011 Public Outreach Meeting: Junction City, December 07



Topics seven (7) and twelve (12) were discussed at length and were of special concern to all attendees. These **are not** listed in any priority.

1. Has there been a cost/benefit analysis completed?

Yes, TRRP technical teams conduct cost benefit analysis in terms of how much fishery habitat can be developed based on the different scientific approaches proposed in designs.

a. Fiscal - How much money has been spent so far?

\$130 million over 12 years, which is an average of \$10.8 million per/year. The Record of Decision (the federal decision from 2000 that returned higher flows to the river) envisioned full program funding of \$16 million per year, which would have totaled \$192 million. This funding goal was never achieved.

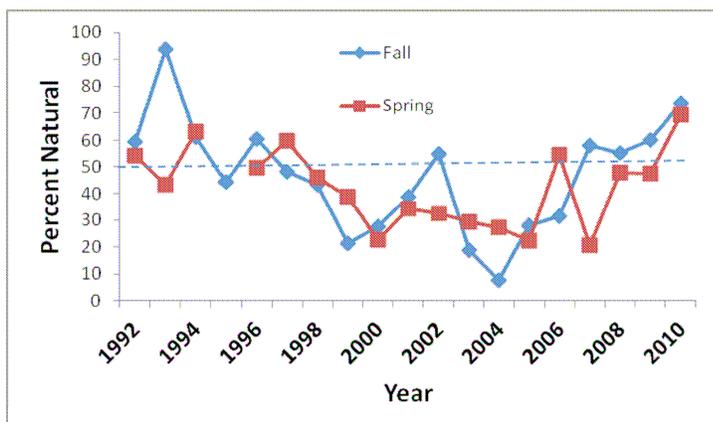
b. Biological - Did the implementation of the projects help reach goals?

Yes, in the short ecological timeframe since the first project went in (2005) there are signs of improvement in key program targets. The Program is attempting to re-establish natural river processes throughout a 40-mile stretch of the Trinity River, resulting in improved fisheries habitat. This is a natural system and we are seeking broad-scale changes, we are seeing a gradual change in the use of project sites by fish.

TRRP Annual Reports and Performance Measures document changes seen in the Trinity River since implementation of the TRRP. Past annual reports are available from the Document Library in TRRP Online Data Portal (<http://odp.trrp.net/>). Paper copies are available at the TRRP Office (1313 S Main Street, Weaverville). The Performance Measure Reports, developed to quantify changes associated with TRRP management actions, are available at the following link: http://www.trrp.net/?page_id=490

These reports indicate that progress has been made in improving physical habitat improvements (increased and better areas for young fish), however, not enough time has passed for ecological change to be seen in generations of increased fish. These reports also show improvements in the riparian corridor with regeneration and growth occurring in the re-vegetated areas.

The graph shown here is generated from our Performance Measures report, titled "Proportion of Natural Origin Salmonids Contributing to Total In-River Run". A link to the complete report is available here - http://odp.trrp.net/FileDatabase/Documents/Hatchery_ratios-pmfinalNH3.pdf



Natural fall- and spring- run Chinook have increased relative to hatchery salmon in recent years. Dashed blue line is a visual guide to indicate when half the fish are natural (note: high flows were returned to the river in 2005.)

2. Is there maintenance on existing sites?

No, the Program was designed to restore river processes and no funds were designated for maintenance. Current projects are being designed to respond to river flows and will change in response to changing river dynamics.

The project sites are designed for two approaches:

1. Immediate gains in fish habitat
2. Areas are expected to respond to and change with the range of flows stipulated under the Record of Decision.

3. What is the status of the Upper Junction City project?

Upper Junction City is one of two channel rehabilitation projects slated for construction during the summer of 2012. The TRRP Design Team, a multi-agency team with substantial expertise in river restoration techniques, held special meetings in December 2011 and January 2012. The meetings addressed concerns about proposed 2012 projects raised by stakeholders at recent Trinity Management Council and Trinity Adaptive Management Working Group meetings. The Upper Junction City project's design was changed based on technical evaluations of the concerns raised during these meetings, balancing these concerns with the need to achieve the habitat goals of the Program.

A public meeting, required by federal law for project review, was held on January 26, 2012 at the Douglas City Firehouse, and reviewed the associated environmental documents. Final designs of wood structures that will be implemented into the project are currently in design.

Proposed river channel rehabilitation activities are now within the required 30 day public review period.

The Draft EA/IS was prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act and National Environmental Policy Act requirements and is available on the TRRP website <http://www.trrp.net/> and http://www.usbr.gov/mp/nepa/nepa_projdetails.cfm?Project_ID=8963.

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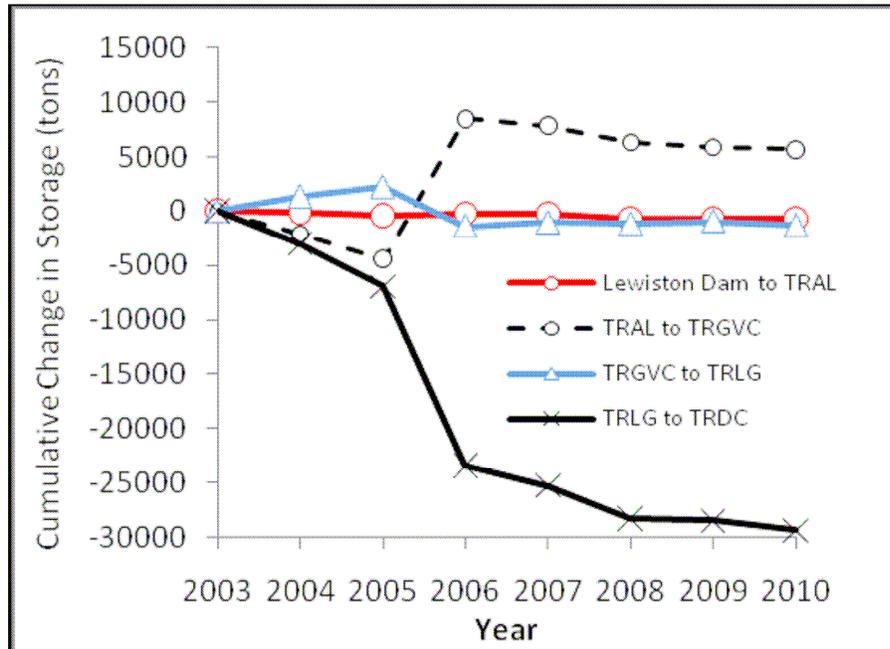
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4. What are the affects of the upland sediment reduction projects?

Upland sediment reducing projects have been successful in reducing the amount of fine sediment reaching the river, as documented in our Performance Measure report, "Change in Fine Sediment Storage" available at the following link:

http://odp.trrp.net/FileDatabase/Documents/FSS_Performance_Measure-PM_NHDG1.pdf



Cumulative changes in fine bed material storage for Water Years 2004-2010 with zero budget balance assigned to Water Year 2003

Trinity River at:
Lewiston (TRAL)
Lowden Meadows (TRLM)
Limekiln Gulch (TRLG)
Douglas City (TRDC)

TRRP has supported a significant number of watershed projects through well-leveraged cooperative ventures with other Trinity basin entities. TRRP and its partners collaborate on a number of watershed restoration projects including road decommissioning and storm-proofing, post-fire rehabilitation, and other projects that reduce the amount of fine sediment reaching the mainstem Trinity River.

5. Is the program considering the lifespan of the Dam?

Not directly. The Trinity River Restoration Program was established after the dam construction turned the Trinity into a "managed" river. In many ways the watershed directly downstream of the dam is the "new headwaters" of the Trinity.

The Program's mandate is to restore the river within the context of the altered flows, projects and fisheries restoration work prescribed by the Record of Decision. Restoration of river processes resembling pre-dam natural flows will benefit the Trinity River under either managed or natural flows. The current flow regime works towards patterning natural flows that flush sediment out of the river while also reducing risk of flooding and other considerations.

6. What is the public review and input process?

Has there been a comment period for 2012 projects?

Project planning, design and implementation can take up to three years so informal public input is received continually. Local public input includes substantial interaction with private landowners and public entities within and near the project area as well as with the Trinity River Guides Association, other stakeholders and the general public.

The public can stay informed through the Trinity Adaptive Management Working Group (TAMWG), which is comprised of local stakeholders, and through the Trinity Management Council (TMC), which is comprised of participating agencies and tribal organizations, including the County of Trinity. Special meetings are also an opportunity to submit feedback – examples include the October 2010 meeting where conceptual designs for the Lower Steiner Flat project were presented and the July 2011 community meeting on the Wheel Gulch and Upper Junction City project designs.

Informal input is received continually through letters, email and in person visits to the TRRP office. Specific stakeholder groups can invite TRRP to present designs at different stages. The best example is the Trinity River Guides Association, which requested a presentation of the Upper Junction City plan at one of their monthly meetings. Guides met with TRRP staff 13 other times since spring of 2011. It was from their input that the TRRP placed additional attention to adult holding habitat, like pools, in designs.

What is the public review period for the Lower Steiner Flat projects and the Upper Junction City projects? Lower Steiner Flat and Upper Junction City are considered together as the Proposed Project and the formal 30-day public comment period began on February 17, 2012 and closes March 20, 2012. See the answer to Question 3 for additional detail.

Comments during this review period should be based upon the Proposed Project description provided in the Environmental Assessment / Initial Study (EA/IS) document. The EA/IS will be completed to meet requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) laws.

a. Can there be a review of the 2012 project designs?

Yes. Review and comment on 2012 project designs would be most productive by specifically commenting on the designs as presented in the Proposed Project EA/IS during the formal review period that ends March 20, 2012.

b. What is the assessment process before a project starts?

The TRRP will continue to evaluate the proposed work during the EA/IS public review period, and prior to implementation. Continual review is needed to evaluate ideas and concerns that external parties bring to light and to assess project implementation. Written comments submitted in the formal comment period will be addressed in the Final EA/IS. Errors or needed project updates noted internally will also be included in the Final EA/IS.

Primary assessments, which document the existing condition before any work is done, may be conducted up until implementation. All pre-project survey data serve as baseline information for post-project comparisons. This includes aerial photography, aerial LiDAR surveys for topographical detail, boat-based sonar for river bathymetry and biological habitat surveys that contribute to the Integrated Habitat Assessment Project database. Projects continue to be evaluated through construction and modified if conditions require design alterations. This does not change overall design objectives.

7. Phase I Review

Complete Phase I review prior to additional in channel project implementation and monitor effectiveness of existing work/construction for a couple of years. Focus on watershed and up-slope sediment work during that time.

The Phase I review is well underway, watershed projects are continuing in 2012, and the 2012 Upper Junction City and Lower Steiner Flat projects are proceeding after significant redesign and reduction in scope, while still addressing the habitat goals as endorsed by the TAMWG and approved by the TMC.

TRRP's Scientific Advisory Board is currently conducting a review of Phase I channel rehabilitation projects. Their findings are expected during the summer of 2012 and will help guide projects planned for construction in 2013 and beyond.

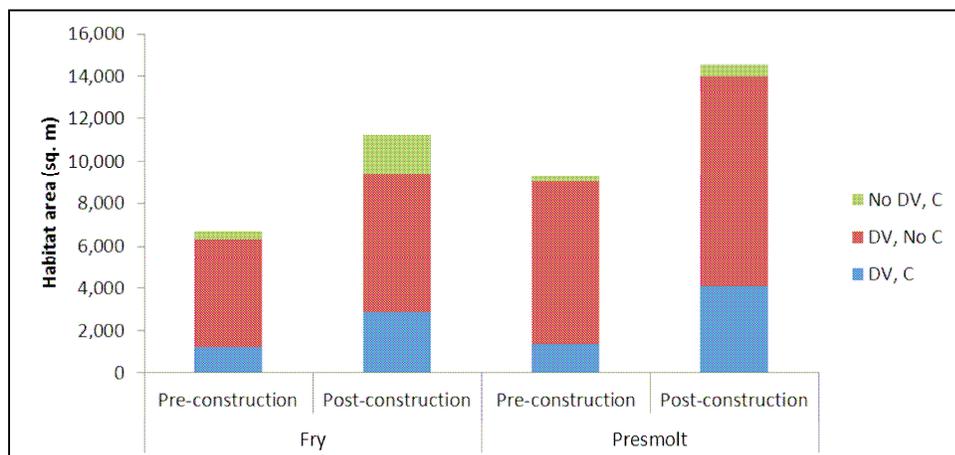
In the mean time, the TRRP is judiciously moving forward by implementing two channel rehabilitation projects: Upper Junction City and Lower Steiner Flat. Stakeholders, TRRP technical experts and external experts have reviewed plans for each site. Designs for these projects have been influenced by evaluations of the short-term physical and biological effects of previous restoration activities. The two sites were selected by the TRRP Design Team precisely because they provide the opportunity to move forward cautiously while the Phase I review is completed. On the ground watershed work continues in fiscal year 2012 to reduce fine sediment through road decommissioning and/or repair.

8. What are the annual fish numbers before and after the projects?

Fish numbers at specific sites before and after projects are reported when a site is part of the monitoring plan. Fish counts at single locations are not as reliable as an indicator of system health as the measurement of available fish habitat. Habitat is viewed and measurable and is site specific. Fish counts and the amount of increased habitat are both used as indicators of system health.

Measurement of improved habitat and visual fish count of redds at a number of project sites indicate that the numbers of fish spawning at these sites is increasing. An example of habitat expansion is documented in our Performance Measure report, "Chinook and Coho Salmon Rearing Habitat", available at the following link:

<http://odp.trrp.net/FileDatabase/Documents/HabitatDHG0127121.pdf>



Available salmon rearing habitat across the entire Sven Olberston rehabilitation site (RKM 178.94-179.6) at 8.6 m³/s (300 cfs). Pre-construction conditions were measured in 2008 and post-construction conditions were measured in 2009.

Optimal Chinook salmon and coho salmon habitat was defined as areas within Depth/Velocity and in-water escape Cover (DV,C) criteria.

Sites are dynamic and evolve during different water-year types and with different flows. Available funds are insufficient to monitor all sites at all flows during the year. This makes it difficult to obtain counts of fry and pre-smolt numbers. The Integrated Habitat Assessment Project (IHAP) identified improvements in “optimal” and “quality” habitat for juvenile salmonids during annual surveys that measure depth, velocity of water and vegetation cover at specific sites.

The Program relies on its partners to determine juvenile out-migrant and adult numbers. These partners include National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) the Yurok Tribe and the Hoopa Valley Tribe. Fish counts compiled by these program partners are used to evaluate success as reported in our performance measures and annual reports. Additional analyses by partner and external technical experts indicate how the Trinity River fisheries are changing over time.

9. Can the program be expanded to the watershed(s) above the dam?

No, the TRRP was established in 2000 to rehabilitate the Trinity River below Lewiston Dam to the North Fork in order to restore fisheries to pre-dam levels. The Flow Evaluation Study, the EIR/EIS, and the Record of Decision address only this section of the Trinity River. Other program partners (USFS, BLM et al) may conduct activity in the basin above the dam to benefit fish populations and habitat.

10. How is erosion, loss of private river frontage and altered aesthetics resulting from TRRP activities addressed?

Property owners should expect changes as a result of normal river processes on properties next to the river. The Record of Decision (ROD) tasked TRRP with establishing natural river processes, under prescribed flows, in the Trinity River. A natural river will, if left to its own devices, move soil and rocks from one place to another, reshaping the landscape and river channel along the way.

The current flow regime is a result of the work towards patterning natural flows that flush sediment out of the river while also reducing risk of flooding and other considerations. Prior to the dam the Trinity River had flows as high 70,000 cubic feet per second. The dam protects property owners from that type of historic flooding and the ROD states that dam releases will not exceed 11,000 cubic feet per second, even in a very wet year.

Prior to the implementation of the ROD, up to 98% of Trinity River water was annually exported out of the natural Trinity River watershed and piped to the Sacramento River to serve agricultural and residential consumers in southern areas of California, in addition to supporting electric power generation through a number of connected facilities.

Over time, both Trinity residents and visitors came to view the resulting lower flow levels as the “new normal”. Those same lower flows stopped the river from shifting its streambed normally, as it would with natural variations in flow. As a result of the ROD, approximately 50% of the water remains in the Trinity River to facilitate restoration of the fisheries. These improved flows also benefit recreation, local economies and riverfront property values. TRRP has provided financial mitigation to landowners who needed to relocate water wells and septic systems as the result of restored (higher) flows. There are trade-offs from a river with more natural activity. Movement

and deposition of materials by the river can cause bank erosion or the accumulation of new soil and wood debris on riverfront property.

11. Pools are filling in, and there is an associated loss of recreational opportunities (swimming holes).

A bathymetric survey (underwater river channel mapping process) using sonar is being conducted in 2012 determine how much filling or scouring (deepening) of pools has occurred since an earlier survey. Fill and scour are processes of a healthy functional river and much of this dynamic change is due to the river being returned to more natural flows. Maintenance of pools was not a specific objective of the TRRP, and the EIR/EIS and Record of Decision do not support maintenance activities.

12. Hazards

a. Who is responsible for removing hazards?

Hazards such as drifting logs and submerged fallen trees are a normal component of a natural dynamic river in a forested watershed and are to be expected in Wild and Scenic Rivers.

The Trinity River Restoration Program is a partnership of local, state and federal agencies and tribal members that all play roles in the program and process. Hazard removal is not the responsibility of the TRRP.

On occasion, hazards may be removed by one of the partner federal agencies (BLM, USFS) that administer public lands along the river when resources are available. Method of removal would depend on the agency responding and the availability of resources. The California Department of Boating and Waterways provides water safety tips on its website.

b. How are hazards removed?

The method of removal would depend on the management agency and the specific hazard.

13. Can we develop a protocol for removing hazards, which could include a risk assessment?

We welcome the initiative of river recreationists to assist partnering agencies in developing a protocol for hazard removal. A public information campaign to enhance public knowledge about river safety and risks would be helpful. A successful hazard removal program would require participation of all responsible parties, including the over 430 private landowners along the river. A campaign to support the Trinity County Sheriff's Search and Rescue White Water Rescue Team would also enhance river safety.

14. Is it a priority of the program to report results to the general public on all projects?

It is a priority of the TRRP to report results to the public. The public sees all the data that has approval of the entire Trinity River Restoration Program, most often in the form of reports, performance measures, or published articles.

The TRRP website is extensive and also has all available, quality assured-quality controlled data included. (note: QA/QC data is highly reviewed data that has been processed through systems to insure the most accurate outcomes).

The TRRP has begun assembling Data Packages for interagency, stakeholder and public use. **These include our new Performance Measures reports**, that are individual brief reports that document successes, uncertainties and areas that need additional attention / improvement.

The Online Data Portal is available here - <http://odp.trrp.net>

The Performance Measure reports are available here - http://www.trrp.net/?page_id=490

Initial data holdings include stream-flow, temperature, aerial photography, and pre-ROD restoration sites. Data holdings continue to expand and a new mapping interface is being developed. The public can view the available data on the Data Inventory page (http://www.trrp.net/?page_id=270).

Since a number of these files are especially large you may also come to the TRRP office and bring a flash drive or other storage device for easy file transfer.

We invite the public to explore our website in depth. If you cannot find what you are looking for on the website, please call: (530) 623 - 1800

15. Are fish biologists involved in the program? How many and to what extent?

The Executive Director of the TRRP, Robin Schrock, is a fisheries biologist with over 25 years of experience on fisheries restoration projects with a focus on anadromous fish species, in particular Pacific salmon and steelhead in managed rivers.

a. Project involvement?

There are 18 fishery biologists who, as technical experts, support TRRP fish restoration activities-this does not include all the field crews who assist in field work. All are part of the TRRP including interagency personnel in the Weaverville office, and the remainder in the fisheries and natural resource departments of the federal agencies, state agencies, and Tribal organizations of the TRRP partnership. Other collaborating agencies and organizations, including universities, provide the expertise that serves on the independent review panels. The TRRP Fish Work Group includes eleven of the partner fisheries experts.

b. Design involvement?

Six fisheries biologist serve on the Design Team and six on the Interdisciplinary Team.

c. Review?

All technical experts of the TRRP partners are involved in reviews. External peer review has been adopted for all investigation plans, project designs, and program products. Independent value engineering studies (analysis that focuses on the biggest “bang for the buck”) are also

required for all projects over \$1 million. Consequently, all projects receive multiple reviews during the 2-3 years it takes to develop a project. Additionally, independent reviews are conducted of specific program components and products, for example, all adult monitoring conducted by program partners was reviewed and the report is due out in March 2012. Overall Phase I review, which is being conducted by an independent Science Advisory Board, is slated for release sometime in early to mid Summer of 2012.

16. River Flows

a. Can the water budget be changed so there can be higher flows during the fall, until the rains begin?

The water budget is determined every year based on the projected water year type for the upcoming year. This projection is made around April 1st. Year types are classified as very dry, dry, normal, wet and very wet. The ROD specifies the maximum amount of water that can be released for each of these types. The TRRP cannot change the designated water budget, as it is bound by law to follow the ROD.

The TRRP does have more control over the release schedule once the water year type is determined. However, high spring flows must be included in the schedule to mimic natural river flows. High flow requirements combined with considerations for fish life cycle needs leave little room for major shifts in the release schedule. The TRRP website has an excellent summary table of the projected water year type, the actual water year type and the amount of water released for restoration each year since 2000. (www.trrp.net/?page_id=387). In addition, this page has an interactive map that shows the flow release for each year.

b. Can you maintain a year-round navigable river?

Maintaining a navigable river is not part of the Program's goals. The TRRP restoration flow schedules are designed to enhance habitat for specific life stages of fish at specific times of year. The program must follow the prescribed flows of the ROD designed for this purpose.

The TRRP website has an excellent summary of the types of fish in the Trinity River, which includes a detailed summary of the different fish species and their life history stages throughout the year, available here: http://www.trrp.net/?page_id=35. Our fish biologists work hard to meet the challenge of accommodating habitat needs for a variety of species.

c. What is the rationale behind the flow release schedule?

The rationale used to determine the Flow Release schedule evolved from the scientific data found in the fifteen year Flow Evaluation study. This study recommended flow ranges during specific times of year to meet Trinity River fish species' life stage requirements.

d. Can flows be timed with actual precipitation?

No, the annual flow schedule is developed based on the projected water year type and is set for the year in April. The TRRP restoration flow schedule is followed unless the Bureau of Reclamation needs to alter their releases for Safety of Dams releases. Fall flow releases consider effects of flow on water temperatures and fish health.

17. What is the procedure for conflicting policies amongst the partner agencies?

The Trinity Management Council is the decision making body for the TRRP. We are not aware of any conflicting policies among the TRRP partner agencies and organizations, or collaborating agencies or organizations. The TMC charter provides guidance on how decisions are made.

a. Does the program look at the full life cycle of all species?

Yes, statistics from all life stages are used to evaluate program success, and are summarized in annual reports and performance measures. This information reported by the TRRP and partner agencies include: Adult run-size estimates and harvest, redd distribution and abundance, juvenile fish habitat, juvenile out-migrants, survival, and density trends.

b. Adult Holding Pools are mentioned in the Record of Decision but no strategies are described in the EIR/EIS.

i. Are pools filling in and is the TRRP addressing that issue?

A bathymetric survey was already planned for 2012 and is being completed to assess the effects of the 2011 11,000 cfs restoration release. The results will quantify the scour and fill of pools throughout the 40 mile reach between Lewiston Dam and the North Fork Trinity River and compare them to a 2009 survey.

c. How does commercial fishing affect return of fish on the Trinity River?

The TRRP does not use commercial fishing data in analyses, but numbers reported by the management agencies should reflect those effects. For further information regarding commercial fishing and anadromous fish returns, please contact the California Department of Fish and Game (www.dfg.ca.gov).

d. What's the future of the hatchery?

There is currently a State Hatchery Review taking place that is evaluating state hatcheries due out in mid-March, 2012. The hatchery is not a component of the TRRP although hatchery fish numbers are included in program analyses.