

AMERICAN RIVER WATERSHED GROUP
Monthly Meeting
August 16, 2007

The meeting of the American River Watershed Group (ARWG) was called to order by Bill Templin, North Fork American River Watershed Coordinator at 10:06 a.m. at the Auburn Recreation District Canyon View Community Center located at 471 Maidu Drive, Auburn.

Present: Bill Templin, North Fork American River Watershed Coordinator; Katie Maloney, Placer County Resource Conservation District; Marilyn Jasper, Clover Valley Foundation and Sierra Club; Robert Holmes and Stephanie Fong, Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board; Monte Hendricks; Rich Platt; Sharon Kamber, American River Watershed Education Center and Folsom Lake College; Lisa Forna, EDETF; Andy Fecko, Placer County Water Agency; Ric Cuchetto, Folsom Lake College; Caroline Hickson, Colfax Citizen; William Kerlin; Steve Gallanthoren, Hydrologist; Randy Burleson, Friends of the Rubicon; and Susan Crawford, Professor - CSU, Sacramento

Check-In:

Bill Templin led the "Check-In" procedure that entails telling who you are, how you are, if you have any time constraints, emergent issues, and/or individual expectations.

Bill stated the following presentation is the first of a *State of the Watershed* series" that will take place over the next few months.

Oil on the Rubicon 4X4 Trail, El Dorado County, CA - Monte Hendricks and Rich Platt:

Bill reported that he has been attending Rubicon Trail Master Planning meetings for the last three years and introduced Monte Hendricks and Rich Platt as guest speakers on the subject of oil on the 4x4 Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) trail. Monte, a hiker, backpacker, backcountry skier, and catch & release fly fisherman, reported he has served for 4 ½ years on the Rubicon Non-motorized OHV Trails Oversight Committee. The historical Rubicon Trail (Trail) is the most famous 4x4 trail in the world and management issues related to the Trail are politically sensitive and present a challenge.

Monte introduced Rich Platt, recently retired from the US Forest Service where he specialized in Resource Management including range management and OHV management on USFS (public) lands.

Monte gave a PowerPoint presentation, *Oil on the Rubicon 4x4 Trail in El Dorado County* and invited Rich Platt to add his input during the presentation. The presentation included background information on the world famous Trail heavily used by many different types of recreational users creating a need for the development of a Master Plan. El Dorado County has spent the last three years developing a Draft Master Plan that is now in administrative review.

Monte's presentation focused on oil, gas, and other vehicle fluid spillage issues related to 4x4 OHV use on the Trail. He brought forth concerns about such spillage from OHVs threatening the growing wild brown trout fishery at Gerle Reservoir and viewed both the Gerle Creek and the Rubicon River watersheds as having the potential to be negatively impacted by OHV use.

Monte also noted the Rubicon River flows to Placer County Water Agency's Hell Hole Reservoir and that the stretch of River directly below Hell Hole Reservoir has been designated a wild trout stream.

Pictures show the Rubicon Trail as marked extensively enough by oil spills, they can be used as a Trail marker.

A question from the group regarding the designated width of the trail revealed different sections of the Trail are under different jurisdictions; El Dorado County and USFS.

Rich Platt suggested the entire Trail should be placed under one jurisdiction for management purposes and noted three years ago a legal 50' wide easement was granted to El Dorado County when the Trail was designated a county road. El Dorado County is in the process of pursuing a 50' right of way from Wentworth Springs to Tahoe.

It was pointed out the historical Trail needs to be surveyed as the right of way does not necessarily correspond with the travel way creating an issue that revolves around the fact that the travel way keeps expanding and needs to be managed.

Monte reviewed the different kinds of fluids inherent in OHVs and reviewed photos reflecting oil stains on rocks and pools of fluids located in the pathway of spring run off. He stressed you can smell the oil spills inherent in the 4x4 OHV sport.

Monte reviewed photos of Little Sluicibox, a natural drainage, has become a popular playground for *Extreme Vehicle* use that has become a spectator sport. He expressed concern about the newly exposed roots of an old *icon* juniper he suspects was the result of extreme vehicle rock crawling.

Bill acknowledged the presence of a member of Friends of the Rubicon and thanked the organization for their efforts to reduce the impacts of the OHV use on the Rubicon Trail.

Group discussion revolved around Trail use that seems to be evolving from family oriented street legal vehicle use to *Extreme Vehicle* use that includes off Trail rock climbing.

Rich Platt noted that organized events do not seem to be posing the main problems, but that unmanaged OHV and *Extreme Vehicle* use, in his opinion, need to be managed..

Monte indicated that while the photos clearly reflect the fluid and oil spills, additional resource issues include erosion and sediment movement with contaminants into creeks; impacts on native species, habitats, and fisheries; the potential transport of invasive plant species; and wet season acceleration of erosion, turbidity, sedimentation, and water contamination.

While one of the biggest challenges to developing a Master Plan to guide resource management revolves around conflicting use issues, Monte and Rich both stressed well managed OHV use does have a place on public lands and reiterated their issue is with unmanaged uses that negatively impacts resources and ultimately all user groups.

Monte and Rich concluded by stressing how important it will be to review and provide comment on the draft Environmental Impact Report for the Rubicon Trail Master Plan.

Bill Templin noted 4x4 OHV user group volunteers have stepped up on-the-ground restoration activities.

Rich suggested the construction of bridges across spawning streams and the need to deal with drainage issues. Once initial work is completed, volunteers can assist with maintenance of the trails, but initially, extensive work needs to be conducted to stabilize impacted resources.

Randy Burleson, Friends of the Rubicon representative, reviewed several projects being undertaken to restore areas impacted by OHV use and stressed the need for a cooperative effort to address issues.

Rich stated the Trail needs a strong management plan that can be implemented and is enforceable.

Randy concurred and asked for an opportunity to address the ARWG about the issues brought forth by Monte and Rich.

Bill closed by pointing out that the basis of collaborative efforts is in place and encouraged cooperation in resource planning and restoration activities. Randy will be allowed comments after the next scheduled speaker.

Analytical Capabilities at Folsom Lake College:

Bill introduced Ric Cuchetto, environmental chemist and former forensic Crime Scene Investigator.

Ric noted his primary task in conducting forensic studies is to serve as a dispassionate voice while unraveling the issues being presented. He stressed the importance of well formulating the question that needs to be answered using chemical analysis. He reviewed the tools used in forensic environmental studies by presenting a past case he was involved with as an example.

Ric noted mercury in the watershed that resulted from historical mining practices presents a difficult challenge due to the scope of the problem.

Group discussion revolved around quality assurance issues. Ric noted the expense of Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs) and indicated the tendency of academics is to follow constituents of interest that may present themselves in an investigation, whereas a certified lab will only look at contracted constituents not allowing for the same flexibility the academic arena can offer.

Ric closed by stressing the importance of taking emotion out of the equation when addressing contentious issues and an ability to mediate between differing viewpoints.

Post Presentation Discussion:

Randy Burleson stated the first presentation showed the worst-case scenario on 22 miles of Trails.

He indicated the Friends of the Rubicon, 4x4 Trail user volunteers, are aggressively conducting cleanup efforts, supplying oil spillage cleanup kits to users, and pursuing user education.

Randy acknowledged the fact that oil and fluids are spilled in reality, but in fact, county roads also collect vehicle oils that move with runoff.

Randy closed his comments by expressing hope that different users will work together inside of a collaborative process and not conduct lobbying efforts outside of the process.

Bill Templin noted the value of the worst-case scenario photos as a way of getting attention focused on the issues.

Another participant made the comment that OHV is a term that has become demonized and both motorized and non-motorized off road recreational users are being lumped together making it advantageous for both camps to work together to solve resource issues.

Lisa Forma concluded that it is important to form alliances and end adversarial posturing to effectively address the issues at hand.

Next Meeting and Adjournment:

The next meeting is slated for September 19th. The meeting was adjourned at 12:15 p.m.