

County and Department of Fish and Game Regional Meetings

Background

On May 12, 2005 the County Engineers Association of California (CEAC) and the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) met with Paul Stein, the Chief Deputy Director of the Department of Fish and Game (DFG), to discuss ways to improve our relationship and issues surrounding permits. We ultimately identified 22 issues under the four main categories of Emergencies, Mitigation, CEQA, and Operations and Maintenance. After several meetings it was apparent that many issues would best be resolved at the regional level rather than at the state level. As a result, we agreed the best approach would be to have regional meetings throughout the state with County staff and DFG Regional Managers and their staff. These meetings would provide a forum in each of the six regions to resolve the issues and challenges each agency must deal with in providing services to the public and meeting their mission. The meetings would help establish a solid trusting relationship and help each agency understand the interests, needs, constraints and processes of the other agency. DFG has top level commitment to make this work.

DFG Regional Meetings

The following are suggested procedures for each region to use in establishing and conducting their regional meetings.

- **Initial County Meeting:** The counties in each region will conduct an initial meeting of county staff interested in resolving issues with DFG. One county must take the lead to set this meeting up. The objective of the initial meeting is for the counties to identify a lead person (County Contact) for these regional meetings. DFG has identified their Program Manager as the lead person in each region. The counties also need to identify the appropriate individuals to attend the meetings depending on the topic discussed and a method to ensure the appropriate people go to the meetings. For example, County engineering or planning staff may be required at some meetings and Maintenance staff at other meetings. The initial meeting can also be used to discuss other elements of the regional meeting and the role of counties at the meetings, such as facilitation, location, topics, etc. Each county should also identify a contact person for the County Contact to talk to about issues related to the regional meetings. The identified County Contact for the counties will call DFG's Program Manager in their region to set up the first regional meeting.
- **Facilitation and Recording:** A critical success factor for the regional meetings is having an objective and knowledgeable facilitator and note taker. The County Contact and the DFG Program Manager will agree on who will be the facilitator and who will be the note taker. In some regions counties may have resources to draw on and in other regions DFG may. Alternatively, facilitation could be contracted out. Facilitation could possibly be provided by the UC Cooperative

Extension or the local Resource Conservation District. The note taker must also be objective and knowledgeable and be skillful in taking accurate and complete notes.

- **Agenda Preparation:** Meetings should be on a regular basis for easy calendaring. Two weeks before each regional meeting, the County Contact, DFG Program Manager, and the facilitator will discuss the purpose and objective of the next meeting and prepare the agenda. They will also discuss the appropriate staff (County engineers, planners, maintenance staff, DFG 1600, enforcement, CESA, etc.) that should attend the meeting. The agenda will be sent out to participants in the regional meeting with a reminder of the meeting time, date and location.
- **Meeting Minutes:** To ensure a sense of shared responsibility for the meetings, whoever is not providing facilitation will transcribe the notes and prepare the meeting minutes. For example, in the pilot project in Region 2 the counties provided facilitation and note taking while DFG transcribed the notes and distributed the meeting minutes for review. Draft minutes should be distributed within 2 weeks of the meeting.
- **First Regional Meeting:** It is suggested that the first meeting topic include a discussion on the ideal relationship between Counties and DFG. The idea is to establish a goal that ideas and solutions can work towards in resolving problems. It is also suggested that for any particular topic discussed at a meeting that each party identify their interests, needs, constraints, and processes they must go through in order to achieve their mission. This will help each agency understand the other agency to strengthen the relationship. It would also be beneficial within the first two or three meetings for each agency to discuss it's overall, long-range and/or strategic plans (e.g., long range plans for conservation, land use, transportation, flood protection, etc.). The first meeting could also be used to jointly identify four or five top priority topics for future discussion. The agendas for the first two pilot meetings are attached for reference.
- **Meeting Locations:** The meetings will be at a central location as agreed upon by the County Contact and DFG Program Manager. Teleconferencing may be a desirable addition for large regions.
- **Refreshments:** The regional meetings will likely last three hours with several people driving up to two hours to reach the meeting. It will be essential for DFG and counties to provide refreshments for the meetings.
- **Meeting Topic:** The County Contact and DFG Program Manager will determine the topic for the meeting during the agenda preparation, unless already agreed upon at the prior meeting. Information on the topic may be prepared by both sides independently and shared before or at the meeting.

- **Meeting Attendance:** It's the responsibility of the County Contact to ensure adequate county participation and that the appropriate staff is present. It is the responsibility of the DFG Regional Manager and Program Manager to ensure attendance by appropriate DFG staff. The County Contact and DFG Regional and Program Manager must work together to ensure the regional meetings become a sustainable program.

Outreach

It was agreed that it would be beneficial to include cities at the regional meetings, but the meetings and process should be established first before any new players are added.

Monitoring

It was agreed that CSAC, CEAC and DFG would continue to meet in Sacramento, on a bi-annual basis, as a coordinating group to monitor the effectiveness of the regional meetings and to address any statewide issues that emanate from the regional meetings.