

Executive Summary

The Scientific Review Panel (SRP) was created under the auspices of the Watershed Protection and Restoration Council, as required by the March 1998 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and The Resources Agency of California. Under this agreement the state agreed to organize an independent panel of scientists to undertake a comprehensive review of the California Forest Practice Rules (FPRs), with regard to their adequacy for the protection of salmonid species.

NMFS and The Resources Agency jointly developed a letter that posed a series of questions regarding a review of the FPRs, the THP review and approval process, and the rule-making process. They also requested that the public be involved and provide comments and information to the SRP. Beyond this input, no state or federal agency provided any direction to, or had any control over, the SRP. The state and federal MOA specifically addressed steelhead in the Northern California and Klamath Mountains Province ESUs within California. Considerations and recommendations presented in this report apply to this geographic area and are not necessarily applicable to other areas.

APPROACH

To implement the project, the SRP (first convening in November 1998) agreed to operate by consensus, with one member serving as coordinator. The SRP also developed a plan to involve the public, state and federal agencies, landowners, and other interested parties. A total of 29 constituency groups (comprising 128 interviewees) interested in salmonid issues was invited to meet with the SRP. Interviewees included state and federal agency representatives, environmental representatives, large and small landowners, foresters, geologists, watershed specialists, fisheries representatives,

fish/habitat restorationists, South of San Francisco ("856 counties") representatives, and fish biologists. Following the interviews, the SRP visited THP sites in Humboldt and Mendocino counties.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

The SRP concluded that the FPRs, including their implementation (the "THP process") do not ensure protection of anadromous salmonid populations. The primary deficiency of the FPRs is the lack of a watershed analysis approach capable of assessing cumulative effects attributable to timber harvesting and other non-forestry activities on a watershed scale. As currently applied, Technical Rule Addendum No. 2 does not provide the necessary cumulative effects assessment at the appropriate temporal and spatial scales. Therefore, with regard to the SRP's mandate, the state will need to sponsor and conduct watershed analyses in all watersheds within both steelhead ESUs. Also, specific rules governing onsite operations and road maintenance need stronger enforcement and/or modification to further minimize sediment production, improve stream habitat, and guarantee unrestricted passage by migrating juvenile and adult salmonids. The SRP focused on the following rule sections: watercourse protection measures, road construction and maintenance, and winter operations limitations. Finally, the SRP reviewed Timber Harvesting Plan (THP) implementation issues, especially RPF involvement throughout the THP process as well as THP review and approval procedures, and developed recommendations for improving this process.

Watershed Analysis

The SRP recommends watershed analysis as the best available tool to evaluate past, ongoing, and potential future cumulative watershed effects (CWEs) resulting from forest management and