

**Lower Yolo Bypass Planning Forum**  
**August 26, 2010**  
**Center for Collaborative Policy**  
**Sacramento, CA**

**Attendance**

Participants

Kathy Barnes-Jones, Solano County  
Don Stevens, Glide in Ranch  
Tom Philp, Metropolitan Water District (MWD)  
David Okita, SCWA  
David Zezulak – California Department of Fish and Game (DFG)  
Selby Mohr, Mound Farms  
Phil Pogledich, Yolo County  
Gina Van Klompenburg, DFG  
Bob Webber, Reclamation District (RD) 999  
Gilbert Cosio, MBK Engineers (RD SB6)  
Robin Kulakow, Yolo Basin Foundation (Foundation)

Presenters

Chris Bowles, CBEC  
Curt Schmutte, State and Federal Contractors Water Agency (SFCWA)  
Stuart Siegel, Wetlands and Water Resources

Observers

Mitsuko Grube, Department of Fish and Game  
Satoshi Ishida, Kumamoto University

Staff

Sam Magill, Center for Collaborative Policy (CCP)  
Dave Ceppos, CCP  
Tina Chen, CCP

**ACTION/AGREEMENT ITEMS:**

1. Lower Yolo Bypass Planning Forum (Forum) members will send comments on the West Side Conveyance option to Robin Kulakow by September 8, 2010.
2. Forum members agreed to delay sending further correspondence to the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) Steering Committee until the final conservation measures are developed.
3. Sam Magill will follow up with Alex Westoff on sending the case studies used for the Delta National Heritage Area feasibility study to Forum members.

4. Mr. Magill will revise the Forum's charter based on comments from 8/26 and develop a working schedule.
5. Forum members will send questions and comments regarding Yolo Ranch activities to Chris Bowles ([c.bowles@cbecoeng.com](mailto:c.bowles@cbecoeng.com)) or Mr. Siegel ([stuart@swampthing.org](mailto:stuart@swampthing.org)).
6. Dave Zesulak agreed to provide project information to the Forum as requested. The Forum agreed to select a forum member to be responsible for each localized issue.

## **Introductions**

Sam Magill, CCP, opened the meeting with a round of introductions. After brief opening statements, Mr. Magill asked the Forum to develop definitive actions for the letter to BDCP and reminded the Forum of their concern regarding the letter's effect on modifications to the toe drain.

## **Letter to BDCP Steering Committee**

Mr. Magill reviewed the letter drafted for the BDCP Steering Committee and asked the Forum if the letter was representative of their discussion during the last meeting on July 28, 2010. Mr. Magill noted that the second paragraph of the letter supports early implementation actions on pages 8-35 and 8-36 of the BDCP, but asks for a delay in actions on the majority of conservation measures for the Yolo Bypass.

## Discussion

- Ms. Kulakow said the Foundation would not sign the letter as it is now.
  - Mr. Magill suggested the Forum consider engaging the Stewardship Council as a group.
  - David Okita said it depends on what the Forum decides for item 6. Mr. Okita does not think the Forum should send the letter if the Foundation is not going to sign.
  - Selby Mohr agreed and expressed his concerns of the Foundation's lack of positive feedback.
- Mr. Magill asked group to focus on the letter rather than BDCP's engagement to date.
- Phil Pogledich said Yolo County was comfortable with certain aspects of the letter, but Yolo County may not be able to support it if key Forum members are unable to sign it.
- Ms. Kulakow and Tom Philp asked the Forum to hold the letter to BDCP until new measures are out.
  - Ms. Kulakow suggested the Forum look at the plan as a whole.
  - Mr. Mohr agreed with holding the letter until the Forum receives more information.

Mr. Magill asked the Forum if they felt comfortable with this approach. The Forum agreed to wait for more information (**see Action Item #3**).

## **West Side Conveyance Option – Yolo Basin Foundation**

Ms. Kulakow shared the Yolo Basin Foundation's updated West Side conveyance option with the Forum. This option has been submitted as part of the record for the interim Delta plan being developed by the Delta Stewardship Council. She asked the Forum to review the document and provide comments by September 8, 2010 (see **Action Item #1**).

#### Comments

- Ms. Barnes-Jones asked if the Foundation conducted outreach on the West Side conveyance option with interested individuals outside of the Forum. Ms. Kulakow said the Foundation plans to send the document out to all interested parties.

### **Presentation on Yolo Ranch Modeling Efforts**

#### ***Project Background***

Curt Schmutte, Chris Bowles, and Steward Siegel, project consultants for habitat restoration activities on Yolo Ranch delivered a presentation on Yolo Ranch Area habitat restoration/development activities funded by State and Federal Contractors Water Agency (SFCWA), Yolo Ranch activities have the potential to create flood control benefits and improve the Yolo Bypass and its ecosystem. The project began three months ago with a focus on restoration and mitigation, specifically in the Yolo Ranch area. The project consultants asked Forum members to comment on methods to improve the Yolo Ranch activities. Mr. Schmutte provided a brief overview of the project and the project consultant's activities thus far:

- Westlands Water District (WWD) owns the majority of the land. Although Metropolitan Water District (MWD) expressed interest in acquiring Flyway Farms from Charles Tyson, MWD has not taken any further actions. Yolo Flyway Farms is located northeast of Yolo Ranch.
- Because Yolo Ranch lacks authority over privately owned properties such as Flyway Farms, the project consultants were sensitive about including the property within the activity area. While the project could continue without the acquisition of Yolo Flyway Farms, the extra tidal action benefits from the area could prove beneficial to Ranch activities.
- SFCWA and DFG have been monitoring Liberty Island, particularly the Northern area as a potential habitat for Delta Smelt.
- Project consultants plan to excavate 150,000-500,000 cubic yards of materials.
- The RD 2068 levees on the west side of the Yolo Bypass are subject to erosion from flood flows. Levee improvements to Yolo Ranch could create flood protection and habitat benefits. Project consultants would like to open Shag Slough and create a tidal habitat along the southwest side of the proposed project area in Yolo Ranch.

#### Comments

- Mr. Zezulak asked if the acquisition of Yolo Flyway Farms along the toe drain would provide additional riparian water rights for the Yolo Ranch project. Mr. Schmutte answered yes; all parcels will have riparian rights according to historic Army Corp of Engineers records.

- Ms. Kulakow asked whether County Road 155 north of Yolo ranch represents the project boundary, and how many acres are included in the area. Mr. Schmutte answered that the entire proposed properties total about 4,000 acres and the actual project area could range from 700-1000 acres with tidal habitat created north of the stair step into the interior of Yolo Ranch.

### ***Project Overview***

Mr. Siegel continued the presentation with a brief overview of Yolo Ranch habitat development activities:

- Yolo Ranch habitat development activities include the development of high elevation and high inter-tidal areas along the edge of the historic Delta.
- Over the last 3-5 years, the property served as irrigated, seeded pasture for grazing.
- The historic landscape of Yolo Ranch provides an environment for tidal marshes, floodplains, seasonal wetlands, and lowland grassland complex.
- Comprehensive studies on special status species as well as other possible species within the activity area show the activities would not pose a major threat.

### **Comments**

- Ms. Kulakow asked if the project consultants planned to restore tidal habitats to Yolo Ranch according to historic maps. She also asked why project consultants planned such an extensive excavation.
  - Mr. Siegel said to replicate historic conditions, the project proposal would include tidal channels throughout portions of Yolo Ranch. The project consultant would propose tidal marshes and tidal channels the upper portion of the property in preparation for sea level rise.
- Mr. Zezulak asked if the stair step channel/associated levees are oriented from the northeast to southwest due to topographical features of the Lower Bypass.
  - Mr. Siegel speculated the stair steps were due to historic property lines.
  - Mr. Cosio noted the property is where historic tule marsh ends.

### ***Hydrology and Sediment Dynamics***

Mr. Bowles continued the presentation by presenting the physical conditions of Yolo Ranch and discussed Yolo Bypass hydrology and sediment dynamics.

Mr. Bowles discussed the following points:

- The primary function of Lisbon Weir is to provide hydraulic head for irrigation purposes.
- West side tributaries provide sediments and nutrients into the bypass.
- Sediments deposited into the bypass create a net reduction in sediment export. Although this can create a problem for irrigation and drainage, it is a benefit for habitat.
- Water level gages monitor depth and frequency of local flood flow through Yolo Ranch.
- Liberty Island and the Toe Drain are by far largest conveyors of water and a large conduit of organic constituents in the Yolo Bypass area.
- Project consultants are currently conducting site surveys and monitoring programs to gain a better understanding of existing irrigation/drain ditches and the reliance of those from landowners to the North of the Ranch area. It is important Ranch activities not affect nearby landowners.

Comments

- Don Stevens asked how Yolo Ranch plans to control tule and cattail growth in shallow water areas of the property and maximize fish benefits.
  - Mr. Bowles said there are no plans to lower the elevation of Yolo Ranch at the landscape level, but instead create a network of dendritic channels with tule/cattail marsh on channel banks. Channels will be excavated at great enough depths to prevent large-scale tule/cattail recruitment. .

***Conceptual Design Alternatives Section***

Mr. Siegel continued by presenting the conceptual design alternatives for Yolo Ranch. The following is a summary of key points.

Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Both Alternatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Remove barrier and excavate tidal channel networks Simple version: remove combination of tie gates and channel network</li> <li>○ Creating the channels is an extra piece due to land elevations</li> <li>○ Put tides back in place and let nature do the work</li> <li>○ End up with about 800 acres of marsh lands</li> <li>○ Water expands footprint</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Expand footprint by digging higher ground</li> <li>○ More funding = more marsh</li> <li>○ Working with RD2068 using excavated materials for levee rehabilitation</li> <li>○ Cost benefit analysis of alternatives will determine extent</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">-</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Both have alternative flow path for fish and more habitat as opposed to water conveyance.</li> </ul>

Comments on Alternative 1

- Mr. Stevens was uncertain if the proposed habitat creates all the desired fish benefits.
- Mr. Siegel said the assumption is Delta Smelt will not enter the channels emptying below Yolo Ranch. Tidal action and natural channel flow will carry the food supply created in Yolo Ranch out of the area to where fish are feeding. Mr. Schmutte added what the project consultants are trying to create is based on the Liberty and Holland Island model.
- Mr. Stevens envisioned the project area in Yolo Ranch would function similar to those areas inundated by high tides on Brown Island with areas of shallow water habitat similar to Grizzly Bay.
- Mr. Stevens asked if the high tide areas would turn into a refuge for migratory waterfowl, which could affect prospects for hunting on adjacent private lands.
  - Ms. Van Klompenburg suggested project consultants figure out effective management strategies for hunting.
  - Mr. Ceppos added the Forum originally sought out Mr. Mohr and Mr. Stevens because of their connection to the recreational community and private hunting clubs in the Lower Yolo Bypass area. Mr. Mohr and Mr. Stevens have an interest in maintaining private hunting clubs, and seek to avoid creating a refuge area that could negatively affect adjacent private lands.

- Mr. Mohr noted that a key aspect of stakeholder discussions dating back to 1998 was to develop a plan to maintain law enforcement in the Yolo Bypass (this information is captured in the *Yolo Bypass Land Management Plan* available online [here](#)).
- Mr. Pogledich asked the project consultants if they had a sense of how Ranch activities might relate to fowl habitat. Mr. Siegel said there are others areas of the ranch and existing seasonal wetland areas to restore. No specific plans exist to create waterfowl habitats, although there may be opportunities in other areas to add in once the project is complete.
- Ms. Kulakow asked how deep the channels would be. Mr. Siegel said the channel would be below low tide and deep enough to avoid expansive Tule growth. The channels would also have a high enough velocities to transport sediment downstream of the Yolo Bypass.
- Ms. Kulakow asked the project consultants to clarify whether the Yolo Ranch project is intended to create shallow water habitat for young salmonids.
  - Mr. Schmutte said when the project is complete, it will be constructed to function as a conveyance for juvenile salmon out of the bypass, reducing entrainment threats while at the same time providing important rearing habitat. Mr. Siegel said the vegetation on both sides of the channel would serve as refuge for young salmon. He said he would like the area to resemble the western part of Sherman Lake.
- Mr. Okita asked how the project consultants knew the smelt population decline was due to a limited food source.
  - Mr. Siegel said studies showed several factors for smelt recovery; food production is one aspect of that recovery plan. One study that examined Smelt stomachs indicated smelt were food starved. He added the Delta is currently known for being one of the least productive estuaries in terms of total food production.
  - Forum members discussed the possibility of long term management of Yolo Ranch by organizations similar to the newly-formed Delta Conservancy, and noted that public ownership/management of the land could be problematic for local landowners. In particular, a concern was raised about illegal access to the area and a lack of long-term funding for land management. Mr. Philp responded that a Conservancy-type model is one option being discussed, but could be a logical steward if private landowner concerns were adequately addressed in a long-term management plan.
- Ms. Barnes-Jones asked how the project consultants plan to prevent invasive species within the habitat.
  - Mr. Siegel said the development of channels with sufficient velocities could prevent invasive plants such as Algeria. Predatory fish may help control terrestrial plants such as Star Thistle.
- Mr. Magill asked Mr. Siegel to explain the mosquito and vector control plans on Yolo Ranch. Mr. Siegel said working with local vector control and tidal exchange would be a key strategy. There will be some mosquito production because some wetland areas will not drain, but there will not be an increase in production.
- Mr. Mohr asked the presenters to address ongoing long-term management options as they continue their presentation, including clarification on whether or not a conservancy-type organization could be responsible for long term management.

### ***Modeling of Outcomes Section***

Mr. Bowles and Mr. Siegel concluded the presentation with slides on preliminary modeling data from alternative one, particle tracing maps, tidal excursion, and next steps. They noted the following important points:

- The consultant team will use particle tracking models to look at how much water remains with high and low marsh areas to measure productivity.
- The Toe Drain is a huge conduit for water and sediment transport even during dry years.
- Next steps
  - Finalize the maximum acreage alternative.
  - Fine tune channel dimensions for all issues.
  - Consult with the Central Valley Flood Protection Board to assess flood effects of the Yolo Ranch project proposal for nearby landowners.
  - The consultant team has upcoming meetings with the Central Valley Flood Protection Board and Yolo County. Initial meetings with applicable resource agencies at the state and federal levels are complete. Additionally, the consultant team is in the process of preparing environmental documents for all applicable permits with a planned completion date of July, 2011. Planning Forum members asked for ongoing reports/presentations to the group as documents are prepared.

### Comments

- Ms. Kulakow asked when the project planning process would be open to additional questions. She expressed concern about keeping enough water in the Toe Drain for upstream users. Mr. Bowles said an analysis of water effects to Toe Drain is possible.
- Ms. Kulakow noted that as designed, the project could be overrun with willow trees.
  - Mr. Siegel responded that willows typically grow at higher elevations. The consultant team is more concerned about species that grow at lower elevations such as blackberries. Willows growth would not be an issue from a flood standpoint.
  - Mr. Bowles asked Ms. Kulakow to share her experience and management techniques with willows within the DFG Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. Ms. Kulakow responded the Wildlife Area has a large willow habitat, but the local beaver population helps control it. She cautioned the project consultants not to underestimate the maintenance needed for long-term management, as costs could be significant.
- Mr. Schmutte encouraged Forum members to send questions to Mr. Bowles ([c.bowles@cbecoeng.com](mailto:c.bowles@cbecoeng.com)) or Mr. Siegel ([stuart@swampthing.org](mailto:stuart@swampthing.org)) (see **Action Item #6**). Mr. Schmutte offered to return and meet with the Forum members individually. Mr. Schmutte expressed the desire to address all aspects of Yolo Ranch activities with affected stakeholders.
- Mr. Mohr saw value in having the project consultants provide a progress update for Forum members at every meeting.
- Mr. Philp asked the project consultants if it made more sense to provide updates now or once their California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process is complete.
  - Mr. Mohr said he would like general updates and input from Yolo Ranch.

- Mr. Philp said the idea of ownership has an impact to the Forum and is an important discussion for the Forum to have.
- Mr. Magill asked if there is actual complete project description the Forum can provide input on.
  - Mr. Schmutte said the project description is still in draft form but the project consultants will share with the Forum when complete.
  - Ms. Kulakow said she does not know when the Delta Conservancy will receive funding for staffing. She expressed concerned the Delta Conservancy will lack the staffing to manage Yolo Ranch without a water bond or dedicated money from the California general fund.

### **Discussion of Liberty Island Management**

Mr. Magill thanked the Forum for their inputs and comments. He asked Forum members to discuss the Liberty Island management options on page 4 of the summary from the last meeting. Mr. Magill asked the Forum to review the summary for a detailed discussion of Liberty Island management options at the next meeting.

### **Forum Status and Future Requirements**

Mr. Magill addressed the group regarding the future of the Forum. He asked Ms. Van Klompenburg to address the Forum regarding their activities thus far. Ms. Van Klompenburg introduced herself to the Forum as DFG's alternate representative for Brad Burkholder, and began the discussion by reading the Lower Yolo Bypass Planning Forum Charter and Operating Rules (Charter) available at [www.yolobypass.net](http://www.yolobypass.net).

Ms. Van Klompenburg said DFG believes there is value in pursuing beneficial management options with the Forum. However, DFG is concerned whether the Forum could continue to develop recommendations proactively without placing its primary focus on reacting to BDCP. There are venues for commenting on BDCP activities and the Forum may not be the most appropriate venue. DFG would like to see the Forum develop some mutually acceptable management options or strategies for the Lower Yolo Bypass as required by the Charter. She then asked the Forum if they felt it was possible to meet the original goals of the Charter. Mr. Magill asked the Forum to discuss what they need from DFG as both a resource agency and funder.

#### Comments:

- Mr. Okita and Ms. Barnes-Jones cited the Liberty Island example as an excellent management option.
- Mr. Magill reviewed the Forum's charter and presented the following points:
  - Different interests groups formed the Forum: recreational/private interests, flood protection, local government, engineering groups, management of RDs, non-profit organizations, etc.

- The Lower Yolo Bypass remains unregulated with many issues such as trespassing, illegal activity, and vector control problems. The Forum's goal was to develop solution to the problems in the area.
- It may not be feasible to develop management options for the entire area, but it is feasible for the Forum to develop management options for finite areas with the Lower Bypass such as Liberty Island and the Cache Slough Complex.
- Mr. Mohr commented that DFG might be moving forward on discussions affecting the Lower Yolo Bypass without informing the Forum. While it is helpful to hear DFG request something tangible, the Forum needs honesty and full participations from key stakeholders including DFG. He suggested that DFG provide regular updates to the Forum so members can be proactive. Mr. Zezulak agreed that regular updates should be made, and stressed that DFG does want the Forum to continue because of its pivotal location and focus on ecological restoration activities.
- Mr. Zezulak said although he is not familiar with the Forum's Charter, he does not think it is possible for any group (especially landowners/conservation groups in the area immediately affected by plans like BDCP) to not react to other planning efforts in the Delta.
- Mr. Zezulak acknowledged the lack of funding for public participation but stressed that does not exclude Forum members from attending scheduled BDCP steering committee meetings. He added DFG has been engaged in gaining more Section 6 funding and will be completing an agreement with the Yolo Heritage Foundation in hopes of increasing BDCP's public outreach.
- Mr. Okita commented that the Forum may not be qualified to develop some management actions without addition information and technical expertise. He was unclear what type of product this group can produce, and questioned the Forum's ability to develop an effective plan without any specific land use authority.
  - Mr. Ceppos suggested budget is available to bring in technical consultants to support the Forum to help take options to a reasonable level of consideration.
- Mr. Ceppos reminded everyone the Forum has shown the capacity to consider ideas in absence of technical expertise in the past, such as the development of the west side option last summer in its BDCP subcommittee.
- Mr. Mohr enjoined Forum members to share any knowledge of their activities associated with the Lower Yolo Bypass to provide the Forum with the information needed to develop management options.

Mr. Ceppos said one principle intention of the Charter was the lands of the bypass represent multiple landowners. He asked if there is the capacity for the Forum to create cohesion and restore the lands openly with other landowners. He suggested the Forum could establish a new vision.

- Mr. Zezulak suggested the Forum request presentations similar to the Yolo Ranch presentation whenever a member announces a proposed activity affecting lands within the Lower Yolo Bypass.
- Ms. Van Klompenburg noted that the Charter states the Forum will collaborate with BDCP but BDCP is not addressing the Forum in their process.

## **Final Comments and Next Steps**

Mr. Magill concluded the meeting by asking Forum members whether there is merit in moving forward with the process. He suggested Forum members take part in a visioning process.

#### Comments

- Mr. Okita would like a discussion on what the Forum is trying to accomplish.
  - Mr. Webber agreed and suggested the Forum shift to tasks that are more realistic.  
The process has evolved since the inception of the Forum.
- Gilbert Cosio said his opinion is BDCP would continue to operate with no interest to the Forum's input. Mr. Magill added the Forum's input may be valuable to BDCP's site-specific actions.
- Ms. Barnes-Jones said from Solano County's point of view, BDCP poses the greatest threat to their land area. The Forum must continue to provide feedback on BDCP actions in order to remain strategically relevant. Unlike BDCP, the Forum represents a variety of interests not represented on the BDCP Steering Committee.
- Several members of the Forum agreed they would not be able to commit to options they do not have any technical expertise in.
- Mr. Philp noted that the Forum is the only group that can offer management guidance on public access. He also suggested DFG provide specific issues for the Forum to discuss and address in management recommendations.

#### Conclusion

Mr. Magill concluded the stakeholders are in support of revising the Forum's mission and Charter, and will revise the Charter to reflect the discussion (see **Action Item #4**). He closed the meeting by proposing that the Forum develop solutions to localized issues such as public access and vector control. He encouraged the Forum to make comments on documents when they are distributed.

- Mr. Zesulak made a commitment to provide the Forum all of the information they need. He said certain issues reside with DFG and certain issues reside with the County. He asked the Forum to think through "who" is responsible for each issue. (see **Action Item #6**)