

Lower Yolo Bypass Planning Forum
October 14, 2010
Department of Fish and Game Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area
Davis, California

Attendance

Forum Members

Kathy Barnes-Jones, Solano County
Brad Burkholder, Dept of Fish and
Game (DFG)
Tom Hester, Ryer Island
Robin Kulakow, Yolo Basin Foundation
Selby Mohr, Mound Farms
David Okita, Solano County Water
Agency
David Okra, Solano County Water
Agency (SCWA)

Tom Phillips, Municipal Water District
Phil Pogledich, Yolo County
Marty Scholl, Sacramento Yolo
Mosquito and Vector Control District
(SYMVCD)
Don Stevens, Glide in Ranch
Melinda Terry
Gina Van Klompenburg', DFG
Erik Vink, Trust for Public Land (TPL)
Bob Weber, Reclamation Dist. 999
Maria Wong

Observers

Mitsuko Grube, DFG
Steven Lipman,
June
Steve Rodriguez, DFG
Wayne White, Wildlands Inc.

Staff

Sam Magill, Center for Collaborative
Policy (CCP)
Lora Barrett, CCP

ACTION/AGREEMENT ITEMS:

1. CCP will research the feasibility, demand, cost, and impacts of increased public boat use in the Lower Yolo Bypass area.
2. CCP will research the recreation model used for Frank's Tract State Recreation Area (SRA) in regards to hunting and recreational activities. This information will be brought to the November 1st Lower Yolo Bypass Planning Forum (Planning Forum) meeting for further discussion.
3. CCP will contact Mike Hardesty to check on the availability of documentation regarding wave fetch/levee erosion issues directly caused by open water conditions on Liberty Island.
4. Sam Magill will follow up with participants to further develop a management recommendation for Liberty Island.

Introductions

Sam Magill, CCP, opened the meeting and led introductions. He noted that the meeting was a continuation of previous discussions on Liberty Island, and asked Lower Yolo Bypass Planning Forum (Planning Forum) participants to focus on developing recommendations for the long-term management of Liberty Island.

Presentation on the Status of Liberty Island Land Transfer and on the Liberty Island Mitigation Use Rights Agreement

Eric Vink presented information on the Liberty Island land transfer from TPL to the DFG. Approval is pending at the Department of Finance to transfer the 4,300 acres of Liberty Island in Solano County to DFG. This represents about 80% of Liberty Island. Ownership of the other 20%, which is in Yolo County, will be retained by TPL.

Discussion

- Participants asked what the status of the title transfer of Liberty from TPL to DFG is. Mr. Vink responded that delays in approval are due to funding constraints as opposed to management issues. A formal management plan will begin to take shape once the land is transferred.
- Participants discussed how future ownership of Liberty Island will affect long term management of the Island. Mr. Burkholder stated that the DFG is interested and has in the past solicited information and recommendations from this group and will continue to do so.

Mr. Vink continued his presentation on the remaining Yolo County portion of the land which will be maintained by Wildlands. This will allow TPL to recover some of the cost they incurred when the original land transfer did not go through and assures that the land will benefit from restoration activities. It is expected that Wildlands will transfer the property to DFG in the future.

Discussion

- One member asked whether the Liberty Island was completely submerged. Mr. Vink responded that the entire portion within Solano County is either open water, subtidal, or tidally influenced. The Yolo County portion has a mixture of subtidal, tidal, and upland areas.
- A participant asked what other potential land uses might be available on Liberty Island. Wayne White stated that there are various kinds of recovery plans for identified species, but until a conservation easement is developed, nothing will happen to the site. Once the easement is approved and an endowment for future maintenance is established, habitat construction can begin. If the land is transferred to DFG, the endowment would be used for all future maintenance activities.
- Gina Van Klompenburg' asked if Wildlands is getting preservation credits for the TPL portion. Mr. White was unsure,

Presentation on the Liberty 1 (Kerry Property) Habitat Restoration Project and an the Northern Liberty Fish Conservation Bank

Mr. White presented pictures of Liberty Island as it currently appears and described recent construction. The project requires moving 190,000 cubic yards of material and is anticipated to be completed by October 30th.

Discussion:

- Mr. Magill asked if the material might be used to improve the levies for RD 2068/2098. Mr. White said he expected it to be used for the Liberty Island levee along Shag Slough.
- A member questioned how habitat restoration planned for areas directly north of the property would affect the restoration of Liberty 1 (formerly known as the Kerry property) . Mr. White said that he is not aware of other plans for restoration. A redirect channel has been constructed at the request of DFG.

Mr. White continued his presentation and listed the various steps and discussed the activities needed to begin restoration on the Liberty 2 property (the remaining upland portion of Liberty Island in Yolo County. These activities include:

- 1) Obtain management plan approval
- 2) Develop a monitoring plan
- 3) Negotiate a recorded easement
- 4) Put a construction security into place
- 5) Develop a bank closure plan
- 6) Create a remedial action plan and
- 7) Create an adaptive management plan

Discussion:

- One member asked how much of Liberty 2 was owned by the Reclamation District. Mr. White answered 120 acres.
- Mr. Mohr asked whether any of the proposed waterways will be navigable. A discussion resulted regarding the advantages of limiting access to the waterways. Limiting the access may help reduce trespass issues.
 - Mr. Burkholder noted that signs and gates have adequately addressed the issue of trespassers.
 - Mr. Vink added that gates have vastly improved the previous problem of illegal dumping which had been a problem. Since the public may enter during daylight hours, the only trespasser issue has included foot-traffic or vehicle traffic, not boat traffic.
 - Mr. Mohr pointed out that the trespass issue may become more of an issue during hunting season.
- The group talked further on advantages and disadvantages to having waterways deep enough to navigate by boat along the Liberty 1 property.

Presentation on Breach III Preliminary Results

Mr. Burkholder, DFG, gave an update of the status of the Breach III project. He said the objectives of the project are to improve DFG's understanding of factors influencing restoration in a levee breach island and to improve their understanding of how the restoration processes influence local flooding and levee erosion.

Researchers have done surveys of the area for six months. This work is expected to help DFG better understand and predict channel formation and better understand the wave fetch. The dynamics of water flow in this area are complex and are part of the reason Fish and Game has not rushed in to take over the property. Research of the area has included fish population samples, vegetation surveys, and sediment analysis. Mr. Burkholder noted that

As a researcher at this site for more than eight years, Mr. Burkholder reported that significant amounts of invasive vegetation grow in the area,, particularly in the north end of Liberty Island.

Discussion

- Mr. Mohr asked if there was a plan to maintain deep waterways within Liberty Island. Mr. Burkholder suggested that having flood flows in place to flush out invasive species is more important for DFG than deep waterways.
- Mr. Mohr voiced his concern of limiting access capability if levees are opened. He also said he does not want to see the water so shallow that it dries up.
- Mr. Burkholder added that the big picture in regards to global warming should be taken into consideration in any long-range plans.
- Mr. White asked if tests for mercury have been conducted. Mr. Burkholder said tests regarding carbon and the foodweb give information regarding water quality. Another participant added that mercury is being sequestered at the top (of the bypass), and that it isn't an issue at Liberty Island.

Discussion: Liberty Island Management Strategy Options and Next Steps

The group was asked to brainstorm the technical needs and concerns/solutions on key issues which Mr. Magill had presented on flip charts. These issues included:

1. Habitat restoration and creation,
2. Recreation,
3. Public access, trespassing and public safety, and
4. Levee maintenance erosion and wave fetch.
5. Mosquito and vector control activities.

Discussion:

- Maria Wong expressed concern that altering wetlands for the sake of fish and at the expense of terrestrial species may not be sustainable.

- Kathy Barnes-Jones suggested having students conduct research projects in the Lower Yolo Bypass. She would like to see case studies of the success, failures and caveats associated with similar projects in other locations for each of the above-listed categories.
- Phil Pogledich said that Yolo has the interest in losing tax revenues as lands in the Lower Yolo Bypass are converted from active agriculture to habitat.
- Mr. Mohr suggested that county representatives should touch base with their fire and medical personnel. Emergency responders should be reminded of their responsibilities in this area and determine what their response time is
- A question was raised about an adaptive management plan for the Wildlands property. Mr. Burkholder added that once DFG has obtained both properties, an adaptive management plan can be combined for both projects.
- Mr. White stated he wants to make sure that the level of the channel is maintained to the depth which was agreed to.
- Mr. Burkholder thought it would be helpful to see technical info on mosquito prevention. Initial predictions by DFG on a mosquito population at Sherman Island proved wrong. Field experts found there was virtually no mosquito production. Marty Scholl noted that in many cases, tidal habitat projects minimize mosquito production and by nature adhere to vector control best management practices.
- Mr. Burkholder asked participants if they would like to see more public boat use in the Lower Yolo Bypass (particularly in Liberty Island). Participants discussed a potential public launch Mr. Stevens prefers not to see an increase in traffic/use in the area. David Okita suggested that opening the area more to recreation would be positive if it could then be managed. The group thought more information on the feasibility, demand, cost, and impacts of this recommendation would be helpful. Ms. Van Klompenberg pointed to Frank's Tract as a well-managed area used for recreational purposes.
- Ms. Wong would like to see terrestrial habitat preserved.
- Melinda Terry suggested setting aside a fund for restitution when neighboring property becomes damaged from seepage. Litigation should not be the primary path toward restitution.
- A question was asked about the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) plans. Ms. Terry summarized the BDCP Yolo Bypass meeting held on October 6, 2010. A Fisheries Enhancement Plan will be created within six months following approval of the BDCP. Further comments on the BDCP can be shared during the Environmental Impact Report/Statement (EIR/S) public review period. Ms. Terry suggested Planning Forum members review the document upon its release and provide comments directly to Karla Nemeth, California Resources Agencies.
- Ms. Wong would like to see terrestrial species included in future restitution plans.
- Mr. Mohr would like to see documentation on the wave fetch and erosion from RD 2068/98.

Wrap-up and Adjourn

Mr. Magill thanked each of the participants for their contributions. He will contact individuals to further flush out some of the ideas that were presented here today. The next meeting will be on November 1st from 1pm – 4pm.