

Lower Yolo Bypass Planning Forum

November 1, 2010
DFG Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area
Davis, CA

Attendance

Forum Members

Kathy Barnes-Jones, Solano County
Brad Burkholder, Department of Fish and Game (DFG)
Tom Hester, Ryer Island
Melinda Terry, North Delta Water Agency (NDWA)
Gina Van Klompenburg, DFG
Bob Weber, Reclamation Dist. 999
Marty Scholl, Sac-Yolo Mosquito and Vector Control District
Don Stevens, Glide-In Ranch
David Okita, Solano County Water Agency (SCWA)
Jan Vick, City of Rio Vista
Mike Hardesty, RD 2068
Robin Kulakow, Yolo Basin Foundation
Selby Mohr, Mound Farms

Observers

Mitsuko Grube, DFG
Dennis McEwan, Department of Water Resources (DWR)
Ling Su, DWR

Staff

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

Action Items

1. CCP will send a scheduling note out to Planning Forum members as soon as possible.
2. CCP will work with Mr. McEwan to post the Prospect Island presentation to the Lower Yolo Bypass Planning Forum (Planning Forum) website.
3. Mr. McEwan will provide updates on Prospect Island to the Planning Forum on an ongoing basis as more information becomes available.

4. CCP will screen existing projects against the Planning Forum's Land Management Recommendation Planning Goals and distribute the results to Planning Forum members.

Introductions and Agenda Review

Mr. Magill opened the meeting and noted that given the work stoppage in 2009 and ongoing planning activities outside of the Lower Yolo Bypass Planning Forum (Planning Forum), the Planning Forum strategy for development of a Lower Bypass management scenario had to change. After a opening remarks and a review of the agenda, Mr. Magill opened the floor for other members to make introductory remarks.

Discussion:

- Mr. Mohr asked whether another meeting has been scheduled. Mr. Magill noted that scheduling meetings in November and December is difficult due to the approaching holiday season, but that CCP will work to schedule something as soon as possible (**see Action Item #1**).
- Mr. Magill asked Mr. McEwan whether the presentation on DWR plans for Prospect Island can be posted to the DWR website. Mr. McEwan will check with DWR staff to see if it can be posted at this time (**see Action Item #2**).

Presentation: Prospect Island Habitat Restoration Project

Mr. McEwan delivered a presentation on habitat restoration plans for Prospect Island. Located at the southern end of the Yolo Bypass, Prospect Island will be restored for tidal restoration. Restoration of Prospect Island will count towards the 8,000 acre requirement in the National Marine Fisheries Service (NFMS) Biological Opinion (BO) for salmon and the US Fish and Wildlife (FWS) BO for Delta smelt. This restoration is part of a suite of restoration activities in the Lower Bypass including Liberty Island, Little Holland Tract, Calhoun Cut, and the Westlands property on Yolo Ranch.

After opening remarks, Mr. McEwan presented the proposal for Prospect Island. The Island is divided into two sections by cross levee. Land south of the cross levee is owned by the Port of Sacramento. Between 1980 and 2007, seven levee breaches occurred, flooding the island. After plans for the North Delta Wildlife Refuge failed passage in Congress in 1999, the US Bureau of Reclamation took control of the island until January 2010, when ownership of the Island was transferred to DWR. Mr. McEwan acknowledged that restoration plans are still in the conceptual stages, but are based on the following goals and hypotheses.

Restoration of Prospect is based on 9 goals:

1. Provide Delta smelt habitat by emulating the habitat conditions and hydrology of Liberty Island and the adjacent Deep Water Ship Channel.
2. Allow for significant tidal and wind energy inputs.
3. Minimize ambush habitat for exotic fish predators.
4. Provide a diversity of habitat types for multiple species.

5. Maintain existing riparian habitat types as much as possible.
6. Provide additional rearing habitat for salmonid smolts.
7. Provide for sediment deposition and marsh aggradation.
8. Provide resiliency to sea level rise.
9. Minimize the need for long-term O&M.

The goals for restoration of Prospect Island rely on 5 hypotheses:

1. If we can emulate features found on Liberty Island and the adjacent Deep Water Ship Channel, Delta smelt will benefit through improved habitat and nutrient export.
2. Infestations of *egeria* and other exotic vegetation will be reduced if sufficient tidal and wind energy are restored.
3. A diversity of habitat types is beneficial to listed species.
4. The project will provide refuge and foraging habitat for outmigrating salmonids.
5. Restoration of the physical, ecological, and biological processes will lead to restoration and maintenance of habitat for species recovery.

Mr. McEwan discussed necessary design features to achieve the goals for Prospect Island restoration. All levee breaches must ensure that the Stringer property is still accessible by the existing road. Breach options include possible openings on the western levee adjacent to the deepwater ship channel. Another possibility is open the southern levee (on the Port of Sacramento property) and allow flooding from south to north. Some challenges associated with the restoration include:

1. Obtaining all necessary information for restoration.
2. Potential conflicts with the Delta Habitat and Conveyance Conservation Plan (DWHCCP) and Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP).
3. Incorporating the Port's property into the project
4. Issues associated with levee inspection maintenance. Ninety percent of the inspection process is done through reclamation districts. Prospect Island does not have an active Reclamation District, leading to questions about how and when inspection/maintenance can take place.

Discussion:

- Mr. Stevens questioned the goal of minimizing ambush habitat for predatory species, since many of the same conditions beneficial to smelt are also beneficial for predators like striped bass. Mr. McEwan acknowledged that specifics like this still need to be worked out.
- Ms. Barnes-Jones asked how goals 8 and 9 will be met. Mr. McEwan responded that the easiest way to accommodate sea level rise is to create habitats above the current tidal range. Prospect Island has areas where this is possible. As for sediment transport, the main sediment source is the Yolo Bypass; by opening up Prospect Island to increased flows, additional accretion and sediment recruitment is hoped to take place naturally.
- Mr. Mohr asked where breaches are likely to be placed to flood the Island. Mr. McEwan said that breaches are possible on the north and south ends of the Island (likely on Minor Slough and at the southern tip of the Island). This will allow

- flows to move directly through the interior of the Island. Mr. Mohr noted that breaching the levee to the north could negatively impact RD 999. Any impacts to the RD 999 levees must take into account that these are federal levees.
- Mr. Hester noted that DWR committed to completing a study of seepage issues on Ryer Island associated with habitat restoration on Prospect Island, but has not made progress to date. Mr. McEwan responded that the study is still happening; budgetary issues affected the start date of the effort. Mr. Hester added that “no impacts to adjacent lands” should be included in the goals for Prospect Island restoration.
 - Mr. Webber remarked that RD 999 has asked for a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with DWR to provide for regular inspection and maintenance of Prospect Island Levees, but no progress has been made to date.
 - Ms. Kulakow asked if the Port of Sacramento has any other plans for Prospect Island. Mr. McEwan responded that the Port’s property was purchased for dredge spoils.
 - Mr. Mohr noted that one of the ongoing concerns for landowners on the Planning Forum is the issue of trespass and law enforcement, and suggested that the issue of public access will have to be dealt with once restoration takes place. Mr. McEwan responded that DWR is looking into these issues, and has engaged its real estate branch to step up enforcement.
 - Ms. Terry asked if there are any examples of breaching the Deep Water Ship Channel levees anywhere else. Mr. McEwan responded that there are not, and acknowledged that there are challenges with breaching this levee. It would require Congressional approval, and the Bar Pilot’s Association has been against it in the past.
 - Mr. Webber explained that when Prospect Island floods now, it’s mostly empty. When it breeches, the water level in Miners Slough drops, providing flood protection benefits to the other adjacent islands. If Prospect Island is already flood for habitat, adjacent lands could lose that benefit.
 - Mr. Magill asked if DWR will continue to manage Prospect Island after restoration is complete or if it will be transferred to another agency. Mr. McEwan said that a land transfer is not included in the existing negotiated agreement, but could be an alternative. Nothing has been agreed to at this time. Participants noted that regardless of the eventual title holder, maintenance will have to be funded as part of the project.

After the discussion, Mr. McEwan provided a series of next steps for the project approval process. DWR will do a series of topographical, hydrologic/hydraulic, and environmental surveys. It will then develop design alternatives and prepare the necessary environmental documentation, and obtain all necessary permits before construction can begin. In order to count towards acreage targets for the BO, planning must be complete by 2013. Mr. McEwan agreed to provide updates to the Planning Forum as additional information becomes available (see **Action Item #3**).

Discussion: Liberty Island Management Recommendations

Mr. Magill introduced a draft Liberty Island Management Scenario (Scenario) to the Planning Forum. The Scenario is based on input provided by stakeholders throughout the Planning Forum process, but does not reflect the full consensus of all Planning Forum members. Participants were generally uncomfortable with the idea of advocating for a particular scenario. Instead of developing specific scenarios, a majority of Planning Forum members suggested using the previously defined “Management Recommendation Planning Goals” (available online here http://www.yolobypass.net/docs/local_impacts/final_lower_bypass_goals_06_23_10.pdf) as the basis for which to weigh projects in the Lower Bypass against the standards of the Planning Forum. As an alternative to specific management scenarios developed by the Planning Forum, members agreed to look at other projects in the Lower Bypass and screen them using the Goals. CCP will make an initial attempt at screening outside projects against the Goals document (**see Action Item #4**).

Adjourn