

## Lower Yolo Bypass Planning Forum Meeting #7

### MEETING SUMMARY

MEETING DATE: January 15, 2009

LOCATION: Davis Police Department  
2600 5<sup>th</sup> St., Davis, CA

#### ATTENDEES:

##### Planning Forum Members and Co-Sponsors

Kathy Barnes-Jones, Solano County  
Joel Buettner, SYMVCD  
Brad Burkholder, Department of Fish and Game (DFG)  
Rose Conroy, Davis Fire Department  
Dave Feliz, DFG Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area  
Tom Hester, Islands Inc. Ryer Island  
Butch Hodgkins, Central Valley Flood Protection Board (CVFPB)  
Jack Keuchler, Hastings Tract  
Robin Kulakow, Yolo Basin Foundation (Foundation)  
Barbara McDonnell, Department of Water Resources (DWR)  
Julia McIver, Yolo County  
Selby Mohr, Mound Farms  
Brian Monaghan, Wildlands, Inc.  
David Okita, Solano County Water Agency (SCWA)  
Jason Peltier, Westlands Water District  
Don Stevens, Glide In Ranch  
Jan Vick, City of Rio Vista  
Erik Vink, Trust for Public Land

Bob Webber, Reclamation District 999  
Maria Wong, Yolo Natural Heritage Program (Yolo JPA)

##### Staff

Dave Ceppos, Center for Collaborative Policy  
Linda Fiack, Delta Protection Commission (DPC)  
Alex Westhoff, DPC

##### Interested Public

Jim Allan, Solano County Agricultural Commissioner  
Ed Burns, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)  
Cliff Covey, Solano County Resource Management  
Donna Gentile, Water Resources Association of Yolo County  
Marianne Kirkland, DWR  
Rick Landon, Yolo County Agricultural Commissioner  
Steve Rodriguez, DFG  
Bob Schneider, Tuleyome  
Gen Sparks, Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board  
Chris Unkel, Ducks Unlimited

## **ACTION ITEMS**

1. Maintaining the funding source.

### **Introductions**

Dave Ceppos opened the meeting. Planning Forum (Forum) members and staff introduced themselves. All documents referenced below are available on the Forum project website at [www.yolobypass.net](http://www.yolobypass.net).

Mr. Ceppos announced that Don Stevens has been added as a new member. Mr. Ceppos announced that the summary from meeting 6 was being worked on.

### **Status Report: Budget Status and Implications for Planning Forum**

Mr. Ceppos introduced Alex Westhoff of DPC who was taking notes for the meeting and assisted with set-up. His time had been donated by DPC in order to help deal with the budget issues.

Mr. Ceppos explained where we are with the budget. CCP is in stop order for this project as it is bond funded. This could last anywhere from three to seven months, which would be up until the end of the fiscal year.

Linda Fiack said we can still move forward as we have some funds remaining in the DPC's budget and we are covered for today and the next few meetings of the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) Conservation Measures Committee. However, the challenge will be what will happen next in regards to managing and facilitating, once those funds are used up.

Ms. Fiack stated that we are all sharing the same crisis, which can be positive and therefore we don't want to spend a lot of time focusing on the budget challenge. The DPC is funded not through the general fund, but through special funds. With our limited funding we could find some funds to contribute and offer staff services of Mr. Westhoff as long as possible. We recognize the momentum that has taken off with this group and want it to continue. We hope Forum members will think of creative ideas to keep the Forum going and offer opportunities to pull together in this time of need.

Robin Kulakow stated that the Yolo Basin Foundation (Foundation) members are very supportive of this group and recognize it is leading an important discussion that needs to continue. The Foundation can accept donations which could be used directly to cover CCP expenses. She inquired if anyone would be able to sponsor a meeting or part of a meeting. In the case of a public agency, the Foundation can probably invoice you as participants of this group.

### Discussion:

- David Okita inquired if it was possible to get a loan. Ms. Kulakow stated that they can't really commit to that as they can't work on loan capacity against an existing vehicle as there is no reimbursement capability. Ms. Kulakow also stated that the average cost of a meeting was between \$5,000 to \$6,000 due to facilitation expenses.
- Maria Wong inquired if the foundation had thought about going to the Great Valley Center or other traditional funders? Ms. Kulakow stated they haven't done that yet as they wanted to see what this group could do first.
- Ms. Fiack stated that it is important for Forum members to give this issue some thought, and email any ideas to herself or Ms. Kulakow.
- Jason Peltier stated that the most valuable resource we have here is this group of people. One thought he had was to form an agenda committee, which could serve as a support group for Mr. Ceppos and Ms. Fiack. This group could develop the agenda for the next meeting, sticking with the schedule. Mr. Ceppos stated that he had a general idea of what will happen over the next two to three months anyways and would be happy to set out next set of milestones on what will go on and what we will accomplish.
- Ms. Wong had an idea to focus on bypass proposals of BDCP right now. Push the BDCP to develop details on these proposals so we can learn about concerns and ideas as this might be a really productive piece of the big picture. Mr. Ceppos stated that this is a timely idea as we are forming a BDCP committee.
- Mr. Okita will ask his board to sponsor a meeting.
- Ms. Wong has a budget of \$5,000 and could sponsor one meeting within that budget.
- Jack Keuchler inquired about how much it would take to do this process, as the situation would be completely different if it is going to be a \$200,000 project, compared to a \$50,000. Mr. Ceppos said that within the next week or so he could identify what the remaining expenditures and time will be.
- Ms. Wong stated that they have GIS systems as there is probably a lot of capacity for technical consultants. Mr. Ceppos stated the contract speaks to that.
- Selby Mohr suggested setting a goal today as it sounded like there is enough interest around the room for a number of meetings. If we can look to bridge it to a definitive time, maybe there is enough commitment around the table to get us to that point. It would be good to have a buffer to keep things going.
- Mr. Ceppos stated that based upon the generous offers made this morning, he thinks we can get very far down. This Forum was never intended to be a shadow process of BDCP, but that process will not slow us down. He strongly believes if we cannot keep going, this may happen. But having these meetings can set the stage for a conservation measures committee, which BDCP is saying they are very supportive of. This is a very positive thing and he feels very confident this group will be the bridge.
- Mr. Ceppos explained that this planning forum is not supposed to be simply an informational venue, we are supposed to come across with shared objectives of lower Yolo bypass, but the key issue is finding. Funding to create an

- informational venue is one thing, but planning exercises are inherently expensive processes. Do we want to change aspirations for what this group should be?
- Barbara McDonnell suggests that Ms. Kulakow send a letter to members here that people could take to their boards, as a lot of organizations have membership fees. Ms. Kulakow agreed to do that. Erik Vink said he would need a letter by February 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - There was discussion about how to get the money into this forum. Ms. Fiack mentioned that the commission has a general Delta fund established and therefore interagency agreements can happen with us. Commission members often do annual member contributions and Yolo and Solano counties have contributed to today's meeting. Ms. Kulakow said the means to get the money into the forum can be flexible, can be decided based upon what works best for the organization/agency. Ms. Kulakow also inquired if anyone had contacts at the Great Valley Center.
  - Ms. Fiack suggested that maintaining the funding source become an action item, in order to ensure we leave the meeting with a clear idea of what we are doing **(See Action Item #1)**.
  - Mr. Ceppos asked who would be interested in serving on the agenda committee. Volunteers were Jason Peltier, Dave Feliz, Robin Kulakow, and Linda Fiack.

### **Planning Objectives Committee Strategy – Revised Steps**

Mr. Ceppos discussed the planning objectives committee strategy. This committee will discuss what constitutes multi-interest success for this plan, given the discussions we just had. This committee will start immediately, and the committees should run simultaneously.

### **BDCP Conservation Measures Committee Membership and Strategy**

Mr. Ceppos initiated discussion on the BDCP conservation measures committee membership and strategy which is explained in a handout which can be viewed at: [www.yolobypass.net](http://www.yolobypass.net) under "Meeting #7." At the last forum meeting there was a presentation on BDCP, which was followed by a robust discussion. As BDCP is in the process of discovering and does not have all the answers, it is necessary to form a committee to do this follow up from this meeting. Mr. Ceppos discussed the four proposed purposes of this committee which are outlined on the handout.

- In response to purpose #2, Mr. Feliz mentioned that this committee would serve as an extension of the group's education, in order to bring together an understanding of existing planning efforts that can be achieved and what parameters conflict with planning efforts already out there. Mr. Feliz mentioned that this group should receive the same information that the steering committee should receive. Mr. Peltier mentioned that this would provide an opportunity to go deeper into thinking, projects and analysis on the topics that the steering committee has been discussing. Mr. Ceppos also mentioned that the committee may need technical support as they could broaden their discussion to look at downstream impacts and impacts to other HCP projects.

- Mr. Ceppos said the committee could have the goal of building wisdom in, and start discussions along relevant lines. The latest document, which is available at [www.yolobypass.net](http://www.yolobypass.net) under “Meeting #7.” just came out has 10 measures. Two of these are about the Yolo Bypass, modifying the Fremont weir and large scale tidal marsh restoration. Mr. Peltier mentioned that the language in the biological opinion should get down the road of new agencies, construct 6,000 acres of smelt habitat. Barbara McDonnell stated they didn’t yet know where the acres would be, so they did it in a general manner. Mr. Ceppos stated that these conversations were the ones he was hoping the group would have next. These ideas could be put on the table, such as acreage, goals, objectives on Yolo Ranch, as this would be beneficial for private land owners who aren’t in that discussion yet. Including a financial evaluation such as a cost benefit analysis would be useful.
- In order to form the committee, Mr. Ceppos inquired which forum members could serve. Interested members included: Jan Vick, Julia McIver, Bob Webber, Don Stevens, David Okita, Brad Burkholder, Robin Kulakow, Kathy Barnes-Jones, Maria Wong, Dave Feliz, Butch Hodgkins and Regina Cherovsky.
- Mr. Ceppos wanted to clarify that BDCP staff will be actively involved in this committee.
- Mr. Ceppos mentioned that in the handout, he identified a document which must be looked at thoroughly, *An Overview of the Draft Conservation Strategy for the Bay Delta Conservation Plan, January 12, 2009*. Mr. Ceppos inquired if there is anything else that folks should start looking at? Mr. Peltier stated that there is quite a bit of documentation through this analysis and also NEPA/CEQA process in the works. Mr. Ceppos said that we’ll follow up on this over the next few months.

### **Presentation: Agricultural Trends and Outputs in the Lower Yolo Bypass**

Jim Allen, Solano County Agricultural Commissioner, and Rick Landon, Yolo County Agricultural Commissioner, delivered this presentation. This presentation is available at [www.yolobypass.net](http://www.yolobypass.net) under “Meeting #7.”

This presentation gave an overview of the scale and scope of agriculture in the Solano-Yolo watershed and explained that what is done in the Lower Yolo Bypass will affect agriculture regionally, not just in the bypass.

The modification of the Fremont weir will impact rice due to inundation in the bypass during the month of April. That agriculture is already impacted by flooding, and sometimes significantly damaged. There are a number of direct costs, which represent loss of farm gate revenues to producers and don’t account for the multiplier effects.

Rice growing in Yolo county was discussed. Yolo county has been a poster child for agriculture done right due to the synergy between agriculture and environment because of seasonal changes. Waterfowl forage in rice fields as that is where the food is and often times there are lower populations where habitat is specifically developed. However,

resident waterfowl can negatively impact adjacent agricultural practices. For example, birds will eat alfalfa.

There are a lot of issues surrounding the conversion of agriculture to wetlands. It is possible to lose a significant amount of agricultural infrastructure. There is also a tension between providing habitat for different species. There is a tension for organic carbon in agriculture, and methyl mercury. As you look at habitat, you need to consider the impacts of habitat on adjacent agriculture and consider appropriate buffers. Agriculture also needs to be protected against incidental take of species.

Other effects exist from having habitat next to agriculture. Upstream growers can experience tail-water discharge restrictions and other implications from the effects of endangered species protection. Lateral effects of habitat next to agriculture include restrictions on cultural practices such as spraying, dust, odors, noise, etc. Hydrological effects include subsurface pressure, wave action against levees. Loss of habitat for other terrestrial and migratory species is also possible as when dendritic wetlands are created, they force out species such as the giant garter snake and do not provide habitat for migratory bird species which forage in flooded fields.

Mr. Landon mentioned that BDCP needs to be addressed so we don't have negative impacts to agriculture. We can also lose a great educational opportunity if we lose rice production as school children utilize educational opportunities in the Delta which include agriculture.

Other agricultural concerns included introduction and eradication of invasive species, such as blackbirds foraging on sunflowers. Creating habitat for invasive species is an issue when ground is actively farmed for crop production. Milo and Sorghum has been planted for habitat which can invade. Mosquitoes can make it harder for growers to perform. There are three host species of avian influenza as well.

There are a number of policy considerations surrounding this issue. One is the need for 'safe harbors.' Another is that we may see a ramped up competition between habitat and agriculture for mitigation projects, while before they were the same. Another is on issues of adaptive management. Another is full funding of pest detection/exclusion. In the last three months there have been over one dozen boats with invasive mussels which have been sent to counties to eradicate and therefore we should fully fund eradication efforts. Finally, punishing 'good' local planning policy needs to be brought to a halt. Solano county has the highest number of folks living in incorporated areas. We have had a history of protecting agriculture, but now are being punished for looking ahead (i.e., the peripheral canal and bypass).

#### Discussion:

- Ms. Wong questioned what was included in 'job categories' (i.e., equipment operators, farm managers, etc.). Mr. Keuchler felt that there were inaccuracies on the number of agricultural employees.

- Selby Mohr asked about the trend in agriculture return from Lower Yolo Bypass. Mr. Landon stated that Yolo County was called the ‘sugarbowl’ of the world due to sugarbeets, until the loss of the Old Sugar Mill. That is an example of a tipping point for agricultural infrastructure. Once that tipping point is passed there may be no more agriculture, even though there are Bay Area counties which have set aside land for agriculture. We need to be careful with how we proceed in regards to setting aside land to protect the environment.
- Mr. Vink inquired about doing research, obtaining polygons about trends in crops. Ms. Fiack mentioned the DPC’s agricultural conservation easement program with CDs available of maps showing parameters such as crop types, in order to determine where agricultural conservation easements would be best. Ms. Wong mentioned that as the Yolo Natural Heritage Program looks at agriculture as a habitat type, they have mapped the last 25 years of crop production in Yolo county and done a trend analysis.
- Mr. Peltier inquired about a specific area, Liberty farms. He thought that relatively recently the area was all farmed, but now has been converted to wetlands. This may be an interesting case study in regards to what was lost to agricultural production and what went through the mind of the landowner.
- Dave Ceppos said that it seems like we are ‘peeling the onion’ in this planning process, thinking about real lands, ideas and activities. It sounds like there is a willingness, a need to understand the area on a parcel by parcel level.

### **Presentation: Soil Science in the Lower Yolo Bypass**

Sally Negroni of the Dixon Natural Resource Conservation Service (formerly called the Soil Conservation Service) delivered this presentation. This presentation is available at [www.yolobypass.net](http://www.yolobypass.net) under “Meeting #7.”

Ms. Negroni had determined characteristics of soils in the bypass area. She gave a primer on soil science to ensure that everyone was on the same page. Delta muds in areas of the delta at or below sea level formed from vegetation and sediment deposited. Fine sediment was deposited as the water slowly drained back to the rivers. Soils are a mixture of minerals, organic matter (usually around 1-2%) and pore space. Soil particle sizes impact soil texture. Soil capability class designations range from 1 to 7, with 1 being the least restrictive in terms of capability and 7 being the most restrictive. There is a subset to the capability class which explains the reasoning for the limitation. There are difference classifications for irrigated capability class versus non-irrigated capability class. Yolo county has class 4 soils adjacent to class 2 soils in Solano county. The Storie Index grades soils from 1 to 100 and incorporates salt content and drainage into the grading. The presentation included information on irrigated and nonirrigated yields by map unit and showed how yielded tons of different crops (alfalfa and tomatoes) varied due to different soil types. Scores reflected the amount of impacts needed to reach a certain capability. Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program classifications were also explained. The highest quality soil is designated as prime farmland followed by, from highest to lowest quality: farmland of statewide, unique farmland, and farmland of local importance. Solano County has quite a bit of prime farmland.

Discussion:

- Mr. Ceppos inquired about how the seasonal river of the Yolo Bypass affected soils in the bypass due to a lot of alluvium going places it didn't go naturally. Mr. Ceppos thought that soils were improved from construction. Ms. Negroni stated that we have an old soil survey that could help answer that question.
- Mr. Ceppos acknowledged the usefulness of this data, and stated that we should revisit data such as this in the near future to inform our decisions in regards to threats on the agricultural economy and natural ecosystems. Even if soil of moderate quality is lost, it can reach a tipping point for agriculture.

Mr. Ceppos closed the meeting. They are trying to have supervisors Mike McGowan and Mike Reagan come to the next meeting and it may be useful to have evening meetings so that other supervisors can come. He will get back to the forum members about this as soon as possible.