

To: Lower Yolo Bypass Planning Forum Members

From: Lower Yolo Bypass Planning Forum Co-sponsors:  
Robin Kulakow, Executive Director, Yolo Basin Foundation  
Linda Fiack, Executive Director, Delta Protection Commission

Subject: Status Report and Proposed Strategy for the Lower Yolo Bypass Planning Forum

The Lower Yolo Bypass Planning Forum (Planning Forum) formally convened on June 25, 2008 with a tour of the southern portion of the Yolo Bypass (Bypass) and surrounding areas. Since that time, there have been eight meetings of the full Planning Forum and six “subcommittee” meetings to discuss specific items to be advanced to the full Planning Forum.

On December 17, 2008, the Planning Forum received notice from the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) that due to the state fiscal crisis, funding for the Planning Forum would be temporarily suspended. Following this news, a collection of Planning Forum members very generously donated funds to keep the process going from December of 2008 to September of 2009. Under this “bridge funding”, the Planning Forum (and its subcommittees) were able to meet and continue its work. As Co-sponsors of the Planning Forum, we are pleased to announce that on September 30th, the Center for Collaborative Policy received formal authorization from DFG to re-start work under the original contract. As such, there are several steps we are pursuing to resume our work. This memo describes your accomplishments to date and our suggested next steps for your consideration. In conjunction with the next steps discussed below, we will work immediately to schedule the next meeting(s) of the Planning Forum. This will include conversations with many of you (Forum Members) to identify topics you would like addressed in future discussions.

## **Accomplishments to Date**

### Stakeholder Education

- Beginning in August of 2008, Planning Forum Members (Members) engaged in a three month process to learn the history of the Bypass, including the historical and current flood control functions, ecological productivity, agricultural output, and the regulatory process governing its land. This process assisted stakeholders in understanding the physical, social, and political pressures on the system as a whole.

### Agreement to Fund the Planning Forum

- As noted, in late 2008 DFG notified the Planning Forum that it would have to temporarily suspend funding for this effort. Stakeholders agreed that there was merit in continuing this effort, as it was and continues to be the only effort of its kind in the southern portion of the Bypass to discuss pressing issues in the area and develop

mutually acceptable solutions to a variety of Bypass problems. This funding sustained the Planning Forum effort through September of 2009.

#### Development of a Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) Subcommittee

- At the outset of the Planning Forum, BDCP did not yet exist as a major planning effort. However, after months of discussion within the Planning Forum, it became clear that the strategies for habitat conservation, creation, and conversion the BDCP proposes affect the Bypass and warrant direct interaction between BDCP staff and Members. As such, the Planning Forum convened a BDCP Subcommittee (Subcommittee) to directly address the topics being discussed in the BDCP conservation measures. For more information on BDCP, please visit: [www.baydeltaconservationplan.com](http://www.baydeltaconservationplan.com).
- After six meetings of the Subcommittee and numerous discussions with BDCP staff, Subcommittee members developed and the Planning Forum approved a Yolo Bypass Conservation Measure for consideration by the BDCP that addresses many Members' concerns arising from the habitat strategies discussed in the BDCP Conservation Strategy. The Yolo Bypass Conservation Measure is available online at: <http://www.yolobypass.net/docs/FINAL%20PF%20Bypass%20Conservation%20Measure.pdf>.
- As a standing member of the Subcommittee, DFG also included many of the principles of the Planning Forum's Yolo Bypass Conservation Measure in a Yolo Bypass "Position Statement" provided to all DFG employees working on Delta issues, approved by DFG Director Don Koch on July 23, 2009.
- In addition to the Yolo Bypass Conservation Measure, the Subcommittee also developed a list of the potential local impacts of BDCP on existing land uses, owners, and local governments and solutions to those impacts. That document, entitled "Local Impacts From Habitat Development And Delta Infrastructure Projects and Suggested Solutions" can be found online at: <http://www.yolobypass.net/docs/FINAL%20Lower%20Yolo%20Bypass%20Planning%20Forum%20Impacts-solutions.pdf>

#### **Proposed Strategy for Moving Forward**

Initially, the Planning Forum was convened to develop a comprehensive management strategy for the areas in and around the lower Bypass. Given the increasing physical, regulatory, and political pressures on the Bypass that now exist, and the continued planning work that has taken place through other venues since December 17th, it is recommended that this strategy be modified to respond directly to pressures that were not as much of a factor at the outset of the Planning Forum process. As such, we propose the following next steps for consideration by Planning Forum members:

#### Development of a Liberty Island Conservation Measure

- Liberty Island is situated at the southernmost end of the Bypass. As such, it plays a central role in everything that happens in the surrounding area from a flood control, ecological, agricultural, and recreational perspective. Conditions on Liberty Island were and remain a major impetus to why the Planning Forum was convened in the

first place. With assistance from DFG, it is strongly recommended that the Planning Forum develop a Liberty Island conservation measure similar to what was prepared for the Yolo Bypass Conservation Measure. Upon completion, such a document would be forwarded to BDCP and other organizations considering projects in and around the Bypass.

#### Discussions regarding Prospect Island

- Prospect Island, located east of Liberty Island, is being considered for a number of habitat-related projects by DWR and potentially other parties. Before such projects can be pursued however, long standing concerns remain by Ryer Island parties regarding the appropriateness and effectiveness of restoration on Prospect Island. The facilitation team will continue to work with the Planning Forum as a whole, and directly affected stakeholders to address and potentially resolve these long-standing concerns.

#### Create Dialogue between Cache Slough Landowners and Affected Local and State Agencies

- The area immediately west of the southernmost tip of Liberty Island, often referred to as the “Cache Slough Complex” plays a critical role in the agricultural, ecological, and water supply function of the Bypass and Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. It is also considered one of the most beneficial areas to create new habitat for a variety of species, including the Delta smelt. Concerns have been raised by local landowners, reclamation districts, and water suppliers that increasing habitat for special-status species like the smelt could negatively affect their operations. As such, the Planning Forum could serve as a venue for dialogue between all affected parties to begin designing mutually acceptable solutions to these concerns.

#### Final Planning Forum Report

- After the steps discussed above take place, it is recommended that the Planning Forum prepare a final report on the accomplishments to date, suggested strategies for the future, and recommendations for implementation of these strategies. At a minimum, this report should be circulated to BDCP, the Central Valley Flood Management Planning Program, the California Legislature, and affected resources agencies.