

MEETING NOTES
Feather River Regional Floodplain Management Plan
NGO Meeting with Ducks Unlimited and Trout Unlimited
May 7, 2013

Attendees: Jim Well (Ducks Unlimited), Chandra Ferrari (Trout Unlimited), Mike Inamine (SBFCA/FRWG), Tom Engler (MBK Engineers/FRWG), Chris Elliot (ICF/FRWG) and Michael Bessette (SBFCA/FRWG).

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the Feather River Regional Planning process and how the Regional Plan can incorporate projects that will meet the objectives of the Environmental Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) while addressing the primary goal of improving flood protection.

Discussion:

The below highlight several general discussion topics and the following pages then provide specific discussions related to information requested from each of the participant organizations.

- There has been substantial coordination amongst the environmental NGOs. These groups have a regular conference call in which issues and topics related to the CVFPP and Regional plans are discussed. The overarching goal is to ensure that the Regional Plans are consistent with the Conservation Strategy as laid out in the CVFPP. Multiple benefit projects should be a key component to the plans.
- Long-term operation and maintenance of the flood facilities that may impact species and habitat is a major concern being discussed among the NGO group. There is a White Paper being developed that may provide information on this.
- The NGO group is also working to help streamline the regulatory and permitting process, especially for projects that provide environmental enhancements.
 - There was discussion of a “habitat exchange” program being developed. The basic premise would be to allow credit for projects with environmental benefits to offset those with impacts with the net goal being an increase in and improvement of general ecological functions, i.e. more and better habitat will benefit many or all species.
 - There is a movement towards working on improving ecosystem functions to benefit all species rather than concentrating on specific species regulation. This is difficult as there are species specific regulations that must be adhered to, but the groups are working with the Resource Agencies to address these issues and concerns.

- There is a Joint Venture comprised of NGO and Resource Agencies that has good research and science available for quantifying habitat objectives. Information is publicly available online.

The following pages provide specific information from each of the representatives based on the questionnaire provided before the meeting.

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Feather River Regional Floodplain Management Plan
Ducks Unlimited, Inc.

Information Provided by Jim Well, Director of Conservation Planning, South Pacific Flyway.

1. Background information on organization: **Ducks Unlimited, Inc.**
 - a. What is your mission? **Conserve, restore and manage wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people.**
 - b. What is your geographic scope? **North American Continent. Our Western Regional Office located in Rancho Cordova is responsible for AK, WA, OR, ID, CA, NV, AZ and HI. The staff located in the WRO service CA, NV and AZ.**
 - c. What activities does your organization engage in (i.e., what role do you typically play)?
 - i. Political advocacy? **Issues related to water supply, wetlands, waterfowl friendly agriculture and hunting rights.**
 - ii. Public education/community awareness? **Viewing wetlands as a means of groundwater re-charge, provides a buffer for storm surge and wetland vegetation as a barrier to erosion.**
 - iii. Land management? **Provide technical assistance on management for landowners.**
 - iv. Conservation easement holding? **DU holds conservation easements on both wetlands and waterfowl friendly agriculture lands.**
 - v. Implementation? **DU's biologists and engineers routinely provide start to finish services (e.g., from survey, design, hiring contractors and construction management) for implementing on-the-ground habitat conservation projects.**
 - vi. Do you have the ability to cost share in projects? **Yes.**
2. What are your organization's objectives:
 - a. Specific to the Feather River corridor and region? **The Feather River corridor is located within or on the border of three of the nine major drainage basins in the Central Valley that are recognized by the Central Valley Joint Venture (CVJV): Butte, Sutter, and American. These drainage basins are the primary units around which conservation activities are implemented in the Central Valley. All three of these basins are extremely important for waterfowl, shorebirds and other waterbirds and, therefore, are focus areas for DU's conservation efforts. The CVJV's wetland conservation goals for the American and Sutter basins are among the highest of any of the nine drainage basins.**
 - b. Specific to flood management planning? **DU desires to find win-win situations where actions required for flood management can also provide wetland habitat benefits.**
3. What are the primary environmental needs for the Feather River corridor? **Ensuring a long-term water supply for existing wetlands and increasing acreage of both wetland and riparian habitat.**
4. How can your organization help achieve or fulfill these needs? **DU is the leader in wetlands conservation. We are highly experienced, effective and, as not-for profit organization,**

economical in working with numerous stakeholders on complicated projects/issues and finding solutions that achieve multiple objectives.

In addition to the above, the following are some items discussed with Mr. Well.

- California's Central Valley is the top priority for DU waterfowl wintering areas.
- One main goal of the Regional Plans from the DU perspective is to provide additional offstream storage to protect water supply, which has a big impact on waterfowl habitat.
- DU has Biologists on staff that can provide input on habitat strategies.
- When asked where the plan could go wrong, Mr. Well raised the concern of widening bypasses or implementing projects that would impact rice production as that is a prime source of food for waterfowl. These types of projects would need to replace any removed rice fields with managed wetlands to mitigate the impacts.
- DU will want to have the opportunity to provide feedback and input throughout development of the plan.

Feather River Regional Floodplain Management Plan
Trout Unlimited

Information Provided by Chandra Ferrari and taken from the tu.org website.

1. Background information on organization: **Trout Unlimited**
 - a. What is your mission? **“To conserve, protect and restore North America’s coldwater fisheries and their watersheds.”** Per TU.org homepage, **“Trout Unlimited works to protect the best remaining fish habitats and populations, to reconnect fish habitats by removing instream barriers and reestablishing instream flows, to restore vital main stem river and streamside habitats and perhaps most importantly, to engage children, local communities, state and federal agencies, partner conservation organizations and industry groups in the recovery of clean cold fishable waters.”**
 - b. What is your geographic scope? **North America. California office does work in Klamath Basin and some Oregon streams as well.**
 - c. What activities does your organization engage in (i.e., what role do you typically play)?
 - i. Political advocacy? **Yes, TU advocates in many forums to advance programs, projects or legislation that promote beneficial conservation outcomes for cold-water fish species including the state and federal legislature and administrative forums..**
 - ii. Public education/community awareness? TU often engages in public education campaigns to promote aware ness about the challenges facing cold-water fish species and the programs or policies being implemented to address those challenges. Many of the programs that TU deems successful and has conducted outreach regarding include **those characterized as promoting multi-benefit.projects. An example is the *Water and Wine* program which is a “groundbreaking, collaborative approach to improve stream flows and water reliability for grapegrowers in California Watersheds.”** (tu.org/conservation/California)
 - iii. Land management? **Minimal. TU does play a role in the Knaggs Ranch project.**
 - iv. Conservation easement holding? **N/A**
 - v. Implementation? TU has an in-house science team that provides technical expertise and guidance to projects and also conducts independent research activities.
 - vi. Do you have the ability to cost share in projects? **Yes, if projects have a nexus to TUs mission.**
2. What are your organization’s objectives:
 - a. Specific to the Feather River corridor and region? **Restore and protect habitat for all cold-water fish species, with a specific focus on spring run and steelhead.**
 - b. Specific to flood management planning? **Same – restore and protect habitat. Specifically interested in the potential to increase floodplain habitat.**
3. What are the primary environmental needs for the Feather River corridor? **Same**

4. How can your organization help achieve or fulfill these needs? **TU can provide technical/scientific input on proposed projects to help assess the potential benefits for fish and their habitat and can provide assistance for beneficial projects that hit regulatory or financial hurdles.**

In addition to the above, the following are some items discussed with Ms. Ferrari:

- When asked how the plan might fail in TU's perspective, Ms. Ferrari responded that not meaningfully exploring the potential for levee setbacks (or other mechanisms that could produce additional floodplain habitat) would be troublesome as this is a big opportunity to make demonstrable improvements in the ecosystem.
- When asked if there was any "low-hanging fruit" in the region, Ms. Ferrari responded that the Feather Region may have opportunities for side-channel inundation.
- TU will want to have review and input on alternatives being considered in the plan.