



Stakeholder Meeting Notes
Monday, February 10, 2014
Sutter Butte Flood Control Agency
Yuba City, CA

Meeting Attendees

Kelley Barker	CA Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW)
Matt Bozzo	Yuba-Sutter Farm Bureau (YSFB)
Paul Brunner	Three Rivers Levee Improvement Authority (TRLIA)
Stein Buer	GEI Consultants (GEI)
John Carlon	River Partners
Chris Elliott	ICF International (ICF)
Tom Engler	MBK Engineers (MBK)
Chandra Ferrari	American Rivers
Megan Foster	YSFB
Terri Gaines	CA Department of Water Resources (DWR)
Mike Hendrick	National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)
Jennifer Hobbs	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)
Mike Inamine	Sutter Butte Flood Control Agency (SBFCA)
Sara Martin	ICF
Mike Mirmazaheri	GEI
David Neubert	River Partners
Gerrit Platenkamp	ICF
Ric Reinhardt	MBK
Chris Unkel	American Rivers
Julie Wolford	NMFS

Attachments

Attachment 1: Meeting Agenda

Introductions

Chris Elliott thanked everyone for attending the meeting and facilitated a round of introductions.

Meeting Objectives and Desired Outcome

Mr. Elliott explained that the meeting is part of the ongoing dialogue to further revise the specifics of the Feather River Regional Flood Management Plan (Plan) and further daylight the issues of concern to the region. It is also an effort to ensure that a good conversation about flood management in the region is kept alive. He noted that the regional partners are very appreciative of the level of feedback

received to date on the Plan, and want to work together with the stakeholders to ensure the Plan is compatible with agricultural sustainability, ecological enhancement, and other uses of the flood corridor such as recreation. Chris Elliott asked the stakeholders in attendance to each give an overview of their main concerns with the Plan and to point out what issues in the Plan merit further conversation. Where there is disagreement about an issue, the group will discuss what process(es) should be used to come to a resolution.

Ric Reinhardt noted that the Feather River region has a strong commitment to agriculture, and that there are a number of flood management projects in the region that have targeted environmental enhancement.

Regional Flood Management Issues and Accomplishments

Mike Inamine spoke briefly about the regional flood management planning process, explaining that the staff and consultants writing the Plan report to the elected officials of the region. The Plan is therefore truly a local product, with an eye on the goals of the Central Valley Flood Protection Plan (CVFPP). He also pointed out that the past and current Early Implementation Projects (EIPs) in the region are not single-function projects; they were carefully crafted with DWR to address many long-term goals including those relating to land use, ecological restoration, flood management and operations and maintenance (O&M).

Paul Brunner echoed Mr. Inamine's sentiments, stating that he believes the Plan has a good chance of being improved, but that everyone at the table needs to understand the political sphere influencing the development of the Plan. Sutter and Yuba counties are heavily oriented towards agriculture and the political leaders of the region reflect that interest. He then summarized some local multi-benefit success stories, including the Feather and Bear River setbacks. He hopes that this meeting is the beginning of a frank discussion through which the various interest groups can begin to understand each other's issues and find common ground.

Objectives of the RFMP

Stein Buer provided a short overview of the Plan's objectives, including some background information. The primary and supporting goals of the CVFPP serve as an umbrella under which the Plan has been developed, and the Plan is intended to be entirely compatible with those overarching goals and objectives, including building in multi-objective projects. The region has been working towards the specific objectives as laid out in the plan for several decades, and multi-objective projects have played a key role. Past projects have incorporated flood management, ecosystem restoration, recreation, water supply, and power generation elements. The Plan builds on a large existing structure of collaboration and teamwork, and the goal of the regional partners is to complete a Plan that inhabits the space in the Venn diagram where all of the interests overlap.

Summary of Comments on Draft

Mr. Elliott informed those assembled that four formal comment letters had been received on the Plan, from NMFS, FWS, DFW, and River Partners, which comprise 179 unique comments. There were a number of commonalities, shown under #5 on the agenda. The comment resolution process will be highly transparent and responsive, similar to what would be done for an EIR or EIS, with a detailed disposition of each comment.

Key Recommendations from Stakeholders

Jennifer Hobbs, NMFS

Jennifer Hobbs would like to see more integration in the Plan of all the various functions the river serves, including ecosystem, flood management, recreation, and water supply. If a project affects one function, it affects everything else that's going on out there. She would like to see how the Plan fits in with everything else, or at least just see it acknowledged that some of the proposed projects could have an effect on other resources.

She would also like the plan to describe/establish an ecological baseline. Describing where the problems are helps justify the improvements. Without knowledge of what's out there and where the problems are, it is hard to know how to move forward. Mr. Buer noted that the consultant team is currently working on adding some setting detail to the Plan.

Chris Unkel, American Rivers

Chris Unkel would like to see the projects proposed in the Plan integrated into multi-benefit projects that can change the paradigm of the way flood management projects are approached. He said that the state legislature is inclined to trim the flood management money out of the upcoming water bond, so developing multi-benefit projects may be the only way to get legislative support in the future for local flood management projects.

Terri Gaines, DWR

DWR promotes the idea of "bundling" projects. Not every project proposed by the Plan needs to be multi-benefit, but from a regional perspective, there needs to be a net gain of ecological improvements. Ms. Gaines said that DWR has extended an invitation to work with each of the regions to discuss opportunities to achieve ecological benefits. DWR expects the regions to take advantage of the opportunities that exist to make ecological gains that are commensurate with flood improvements.

There was some discussion about whether every project proposed in the Plan needs to be a multi-benefit project or not. Some groups have had trouble getting permits for single-function projects, while others have seen their entire multi-benefit projects delayed when there is an issue with just one part of the project ("no pieces can move forward until all pieces can move forward"). Mr. Elliott noted that the Plan is a multi-benefit plan, but not every project proposed in the plan is a multi-benefit project. Ms. Gaines said that if a project is included in the plan and contributes to the overall goals of the plan, it does not need to be delayed, even if it is not a multi-benefit project on its own. She supports making the Plan more comprehensive for this reason.

There was also discussion about defining objectives or metrics for ecological enhancement. Mr. Reinhardt and Mr. Inamine observed that it is difficult to take land for restoration projects without being able to explain exactly how the project would contribute to previously defined objectives or goals. Kelley Barker said the Conservation Strategy should provide those goals. Ms. Gaines noted that the draft Conservation Strategy is due to be released to the stakeholders on April 30. However, she cautioned the group not to get too tied up in the metrics; the Plan should focus on opportunities. She encouraged the regional partners to meet with DWR again to learn about what will be contained

in the Conservation Strategy, and to see what opportunities the Floodplain Restoration Opportunities Analysis (FROA) identified for the region.

John Carlon, River Partners

John Carlon would like to see the regional flood management planning effort used as a way to identify promising multi-benefit projects. At the end of the day, the regional partners will be asking taxpayers for money, and the more support there is from different interest groups, the easier it will be to secure funding. The Plan's primary purpose is public safety, but it must accommodate agriculture and the environment. He doesn't think the Plan needs to fix the whole river, but it should identify three or four really good multi-benefit projects. Ms. Gaines agreed, stating that identifying one, two, or three true multi-objective projects would go a long way towards establishing enthusiasm and trust. Ms. Barker noted that it would also help each individual interest group begin to understand what the other groups are looking for.

Kelley Barker, DFW

Ms. Barker pointed out that not all the ecological benefits called for in the Plan have to be huge. DFW is focused on ecological enhancements at every scale, including wildlife-friendly agriculture.

Mike Hendrick, NMFS

Mike Hendrick observed that NMFS will be basing their regional permits on the objectives that are part of the CVFPP and the Conservation Strategy, so a big concern for him is seeing that the objectives of the Plan match up with the objectives of the CVFPP and Conservation Strategy.

Mr. Hendrick would also like to see an accounting of how much land within recently constructed setback areas has already been used for mitigation purposes, and how much is available for restoration related to the Plan.

Megan Foster, YSFB

Megan Foster said that the agricultural community is most concerned about the proposed levee setbacks (Laurel Avenue setback, Sutter Bypass expansion, and Feather River bypass), and the resulting economic impacts and loss of productive agriculture. As an example, part of her family's farm was taken through eminent domain to make way for the TRLIA setbacks. Though her family now leases and farms the land on the waterside of the new setback levee, there have been issues with trespassing and theft, and they are anticipating future issues with sanitation. David Neubert asked the group to remember that setbacks and expanded bypasses would have marginal effects on agriculture; agriculture would need to change in those locations, but the land would not be taken out of production.

Ms. Foster also told the group that local farmers are interested in doing what they can to help wildlife, like installing fish screens on their diversions.

Matt Bozzo, YSFB

Matt Bozzo said the agricultural community is also concerned with wildlife (like deer and turkeys) entering farms and destroying crops, especially as more ecological restoration occurs near farms. He

is requesting more assistance from the resource agencies in figuring out how to help farmers with population control.

He noted that the local farmers are willing to listen to the regional partners and work with them on how to make agriculture more wildlife-friendly, but to get some of the older farmers on board, it will take time and money.

Mr. Carlon noted that the recently approved Farm Bill includes best management practice (BMP) requirements, similar to the “wildlife-friendly” agricultural practices proposed in the Plan, for all farms in floodways, wetlands, or highly erodible soils that are looking to qualify for crop insurance or subsidies. These BMPs are dictated by USDA and NRCS and are crop-specific.

Mr. Bozzo said the Farm Bureau had provided a lot of information to Jeff Matthews regarding ways to benefit wildlife through agriculture, and he hopes to see that information incorporated in the Plan. He also said the California Rice Commission would be a good source of information about how rice farming can benefit wildlife. Ms. Foster noted that the local RCDs could also be a good source of information on wildlife-friendly agriculture.

Further Discussion on Developing Multi-Benefit Projects

Mr. Elliott asked the group if there were any ideas for great multi-benefit projects out there, and Mr. Carlon responded that there is a lot of interest in the following projects: Laurel Avenue setback levee, Oroville Wildlife Area, Feather River setback levee, and Sutter Bypass expansion. Mr. Carlon believes that if a couple of these projects could get moving, people would look at them as a new way to invest public money in public safety—a way that supports agriculture and benefits the environment.

Mr. Inamine noted that there are several versions proposed for the Laurel Avenue Setback project, and cautioned that any version of the project will have controversial land use issues associated with it. He also observed that the Oroville Wildlife Area project has a lot of support, but that it also has big issues as regards O&M. For a Sutter Bypass expansion project to move forward, the elected officials will need to be shown some very convincing data on hydraulics and O&M. He asked everyone to keep in mind that big multi-benefit projects are easy to talk about and visualize, but it only takes one tough issue to shut the whole project down.

Moving Forward

Summary of Input Received during Meeting

Mr. Elliott summarized the input received so far:

- The Plan should be revised to be more explicitly multi-benefit,
- Formulate a few prioritized multi-benefit projects within the Plan, but do not lose other useful projects that fit under the overarching goals but are not necessarily multi-benefit,
- Ensure the Plan is compatible with the Conservation Strategy, targets a net ecological gain, and contributes to species recovery,
- Provide more setting information in the Plan,
- Identify problem areas,

- Identify opportunities in the region, including an accounting of land available for Plan-related restoration, and
- Add more specificity for what it means to practice wildlife-friendly agriculture.

Next Steps

Mike Mirmazaheri recommended that the consultant team should meet with DWR to find out as much as possible about what will be contained in the Conservation Strategy. Mr. Elliott proposed that the stakeholder group meet again soon for a charrette to further develop a well-vetted list of small- and large-scale multi-objective concepts as well as additional specific wildlife-friendly agricultural practices. Mr. Buer suggested that the consultant team first check in with the steering committee to see what leeway there is to develop multi-objective concepts for the Plan. Mr. Brunner believes such a charrette would be useful for moving forward in the future whether or not the steering committee agrees to add multi-objective projects to the Plan. The agreed-upon next steps are as follows:

1. Consultant team to meet with DWR regarding content of the Conservation Strategy,
2. Consultant team to check in with the steering committee regarding including multi-benefit projects in the Plan, and
3. Consultant team and stakeholders to meet for a multi-benefit concept charrette (to be held in Sacramento and scheduled via Doodle Poll).

Mr. Elliott thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for providing helpful input.



Coordination Meeting
 Monday, February 10, 2014
 Sutter Butte Flood Control Agency
 Yuba City, CA

Invited Participants

Terri Gaines – DWR	Curt Aikens – YCWA
Paul Brunner – TRLIA	John Carlon/David Neubert – River Partners
Mike Inamine – SBFCA	Chris Unkel – American Rivers
Megan Foster – YSFB	Chandra Ferrari/Rene Henery – Trout Unlimited
Mike Hendrick – NMFS	Ric Reinhardt – MBK
Julie Wolford – NMFS	Tom Engler – MBK
Kelley Barker – CDFW	Stein Buer – GEI
Jennifer Hobbs – USFWS	Mike Mirmazaheri – GEI
Chris Elliott – ICF	Gerrit Platenkamp – ICF
Sara Martin – ICF	Kim Floyd – KFC

Meeting Purpose (from agency kick-off meeting, July 9, 2013)

The Yuba County Water Agency, Three Rivers Levee Improvement Authority, Marysville Levee Commission, and Sutter Butte Flood Control Agency (regional partners) are partnering to develop a broadly supported Regional Flood Management Plan (RFMP) that aligns with the Central Valley Flood Protection Plan (CVFPP) and qualifies projects for future state and federal funding. Toward that end, the regional partners will develop and implement a plan formulation process with a strong strategic stakeholder outreach effort to strengthen inter-agency working relationships and engender region-wide understanding of integrated flood management goals, objectives, and needs. A key goal will be to promote a sustainable partnership structure to facilitate future implementation of mutually-beneficial projects. We would like to discuss your agency's participation in plan formulation.

Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Meeting Objectives and Desired Outcome (Elliott) – 5 mins
 - Short-term: Develop concepts toward revising the RFMP to be more responsive to environmental concerns, while maintaining consistency with flood management and agricultural objectives.

- Long-term: Promote understanding of issues toward continuing dialogue for multi-benefit actions and common goals of agricultural viability and sustainability, flood-risk reduction, ecological enhancement, and other flood corridor benefits.
3. Regional Flood Management Issues and Accomplishments (Inamine/Brunner) – 10 mins
 4. Objectives of the RFMP (Buer) – 5 mins
 5. Summary of Comments on Draft (Elliott) – 5 mins
 - Incorporate more ecosystem restoration/stewardship and multi-benefit projects into the plan
 - Concepts for wildlife-friendly ag; questionable ability for wildlife-friendly ag to meet conservation and recovery objectives
 - Inconsistent alignment of plan with CVFPP
 - Support for setback levees or restoration of river processes
 - Need for more environmental setting information into the plan
 - Alternatives selection/screening criteria
 - Reservoir expansion
 - Bypass expansion
 - Relationship of previous habitat restoration activities
 - Benefits of vegetation in the floodway
 6. Key Recommendations: Top 3 Concepts to Improve the Plan (reviewing parties) – 30 mins
 - CDFW
 - USFWS
 - NMFS
 - River Partners
 - Others
 7. Dialogue and Establish Approach to Resolve Key Issues (roundtable) – 20 mins
 8. DWR Perspective and Relationship to Other Efforts (Gaines) – 10 mins
 9. Next Steps (Elliott) – 5 mins