

Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area - Wildlife Habitat Corridors Plan - Corridors Location Map -

Customer(s): YOLO COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Date: 12-17-2015



Field Office: WOODLAND SERVICE CENTER

Assisted By: PHIL HOGAN

Agency: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service



Legend

NAME

Saxon

Yolo_county



U.S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

MAP:
2014 Aerial Photography
USDA Farm Service Agency
1:90,000



1. Concept Proposal Application Form

Please See Appendix A: Applicant Information

2. Project Description

Description of Need

The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area (YBWA) is owned and managed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) with the intent of restoring and managing a variety of wildlife habitats in the Yolo Basin, a natural basin in the north part of the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta (See Location Map). The 16,770-acre YBWA is part of the Yolo Bypass flood control channel that protects Sacramento and other cities from flooding, and is also a haven for fish, waterfowl, shorebirds and wading birds, neotropical migrants, raptors, invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians and bats. However, an unintended consequence of flooding in the YBWA, is the stranding of wildlife during flood events. As flood waters rise from east to west, wildlife including deer, furbearers and ground nesting birds lack adequate cover to move out of lower areas. CDFW staff report cases of deer climbing trees in an attempt to survive. The project would create two habitat corridors to provide cover for wildlife escaping flood events; it would also enhance year round habitat for a wide variety of migratory birds, pollinators and other wildlife in the YBWA, and would be the first step among numerous opportunities to integrate wildlife habitat with the ongoing agricultural operations on the property (See Wildlife Habitat Corridors Plan map). The sites are currently a hodgepodge of grazed and unmanaged grasslands that primarily consist of annual rye and noxious invasive weeds such as yellow star thistle and perennial pepperweed. The project would treat the noxious plant species and establish a much more diverse mix of non-woody native plant species appropriate to the region. The project will monitor wildlife use of the habitat corridors to measure success and inform future restoration on the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area.

The YBWA is also an escape from the urban life of nearby Sacramento and Davis. Bird watchers, hunters and schoolchildren all come to the area to experience wildlife up-close in nature. The project would engage the region's community through organized field days where school age children, high school students and community volunteers would learn about restoration and plant native plants in the corridor areas. These field days would bring the public to parts of the bypass where they are not usually allowed, expanding their awareness and understanding of the area and its importance for flood safety, agriculture and wildlife. Future environmental policy and private land stewardship successes depend on informed individuals who have firsthand experiences as environmental stewards to help build their knowledge and values. The project will provide regional education programs and schools with hands-on training opportunities for docents, stewardship leaders and mentors.

Goals and Objectives

The **goal** of this multi-benefit project is to create wildlife habitat on the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area to solve wildlife flood-safety problems and enhance year round wildlife habitat, create and reinforce partnerships and provide public connections to habitat restoration in the Delta. This project brings together multiple partners including the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), the local Resource Conservation District (RCD), the Yolo Basin Foundation (YBF), Putah Creek Council (PCC), the Center for Land-Based Learning (CLBL), Point Blue Conservation Science, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the farmers and ranchers leasing property adjacent to the project activities, and the general

Yolo County RCD: Wildlife Corridors for Flood Escape on the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area

public through volunteerism, on publicly owned property (The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area). Through these partnerships and the volunteer connection it will reinforce the concepts and practices of installing pollinator, migratory bird, upland bird, and mammal habitat that is compatible with floodway management, provide life-saving escape cover from advancing flood water, supports groundwater recharge through the use of deep-rooted native perennial plants and increase awareness and appreciation of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area and its multiple values and functions.

The objectives of this project are to:

1. Create five miles of wildlife habitat corridor and a publicly accessible demonstration planting,
2. Educate high school students and the public about our local environment and the benefits of restoring and enhancing the Delta's natural communities and ecosystems, and
3. Involve students and community members in hands-on environmental stewardship projects to give them experience working collectively to make a difference in the Delta and inspire them to take action on environmental issues.

Specific Tasks

- *Carry out native restoration resulting in 5 miles (12 acres) of new, floodway-compatible wildlife and pollinator corridor habitat that will also provide an exit and transit corridor for a range of bird, mammal and other wildlife species to escape from advancing floodwater and move to higher ground.* The RCD will plan, prepare, coordinate and lead all restoration efforts in coordination with the grazing lessee, CDFW as well as NRCS, cbec ecoengineering, YBF, PCC and the CLBL.
- *Carry out a demonstration wildlife habitat planting that will be installed in a main parking lot in the YBWA to provide cover for waterfowl from vehicle disturbance and showcase the larger project in a more publically accessible area.* The RCD will plan, prepare, coordinate and lead all restoration efforts in coordination with the rice lessee and CDFW as well as NRCS, cbec ecoengineering, YBF, PCC and the CLBL.
- *Monitor wildlife.* The RCD will lead wildlife monitoring in coordination with Point Blue Conservation Science (NRCS Partner Biologist) for baseline and post installation summer/winter bird counts, bee and butterfly surveys, and wildlife species index through trail camera visual capture.
- *Involve community volunteers in 12 habitat restoration/stewardship events.* Putah Creek Council will coordinate with the Yolo Basin Foundation to bring community members from cities and towns throughout the Delta region to 12 stewardship events.
- *Coordinate 3 SLEWS (Student and Landowner Education and Watershed Stewardship) field days.* The CLBL will organize 3 SLEWS field days to provide over 30 high school students with 45 hours of hands-on, personal experience in land stewardship.

Deliverables

- Five miles of wildlife corridor and demonstration planting with at least 80% survival and establishment of restoration plantings.
- Completion of 15 community planting events.
- Monitoring results to show bird, invertebrate and mammal use of corridor throughout project.

Experience and qualifications are listed under #6; examples of similar projects are listed in #3.