

## 4 COMPATIBLE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC USE



The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is a living example of the successful meshing of flood control, wildlife habitat, public use, and agriculture. Compatible use is one of the messages that school children are introduced to when visiting the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is unique among wildlife areas in that it is managed almost entirely within an engineered floodway and agriculture produces both wildlife habitat and operating income. On a fall day, students will see rice being harvested while egrets and ibis eat what is left behind in the field. They will see fields being disked and perhaps 30 Swainson's hawks following the tractor, feasting on mice and grasshoppers. Later in the fall

and throughout the winter they will see thousands of pintails loafing in the flooded rice while hunters pass by on the road after a morning hunt. Autumn sounds include geese crying in the distance, the whistle of a thousand pintails and perhaps a shot fired by a late morning hunter. In the spring they will see rice being seeded by a low flying airplane while listening to the cries of nesting stilts and killdeer. In the late spring, students will see ducklings swimming behind their parents in a permanent wetland while other wetlands are dry to prepare for disking to remove tules and cattails as required to meet flood control requirements.

DFG manages wildlife areas to protect and enhance aquatic and terrestrial habitats for plant, wildlife, and fish species and to provide the public with compatible recreational and educational uses. The key consideration for these activities at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is compatibility with the primary function of the Yolo Bypass, which is flood control. In the past decade the most common public uses at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area included environmental education and interpretation, hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, and other uses such as photography and painting, and these uses are projected to continue to be popular. This chapter includes an evaluation of the compatibility of different resource management objectives with various existing and potential new public uses at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, and the potential of those public uses to adversely affect management of diverse habitat.

### 4.1 EVALUATION OF RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC USE



The planning process included an evaluation of the public's demand for use of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area and the compatibility of such use with resource management activities and objectives including seasonal floodwater conveyance, protection, and enhancement of wildlife habitat, and continued agriculture.

This compatibility evaluation focused on five principal factors:

- ▶ the potential for land management to conflict with necessary flood control operations;
- ▶ the potential for conflicts between resource management activities and other objectives (i.e., flood control, vector control, wildlife resources, fisheries resources, and agriculture);
- ▶ the potential for public uses to unreasonably adversely affect habitat and the fish and wildlife that inhabit the area;
- ▶ the potential for resource management and public uses to adversely affect adjacent land uses; and
- ▶ the anticipated resources required by DFG to manage the resources and public uses.

Information was obtained through analysis of existing information and through public outreach. The information-gathering process for this LMP also involved interviews and focus group meetings with representatives of various interest groups and meetings with DFG and State Reclamation Board staff members familiar with flood control operations, agricultural activities, and recreation use of the Yolo Bypass.

The mission of the DFG and function of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area are focused on natural resource management. In addition, the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is a low-lying area that is subject to frequent flooding. All public uses to consider are, therefore, limited by these constraints. Permanent buildings within the greater portion of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area between levees would be subject to frequent flood damage and are fundamentally precluded by regulations of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the State Reclamation Board. Other permanent developed recreation features would also be subject to frequent inundation and likely damage. Developed recreation uses, such as traditional team sports, are not consistent with the DFG mission and functions of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area and are not allowed.

The potential public use of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is additionally affected by the limited access to many of the management units. No paved roadways exist in the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area and the limited gravel and dirt roadways available are restricted to use during non-flooded and, typically, dry periods. Access is further limited by the presence of sensitive habitats (i.e., wetlands), agricultural activities that occur throughout the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, and use restrictions limiting the type and/or timing of recreation activities. The management of these access limitations function to regulate the level of human activity within certain units and help to ensure that agricultural activities and the habitat value of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area are not substantially diminished by public use. Management also minimizes conflicts between various public uses, such as nature observation and hunting. Another factor that limits access for all uses is the availability of DFG staff resources. Access requires road maintenance, opening and closing of gates, garbage pickup, portable toilets, and law enforcement.

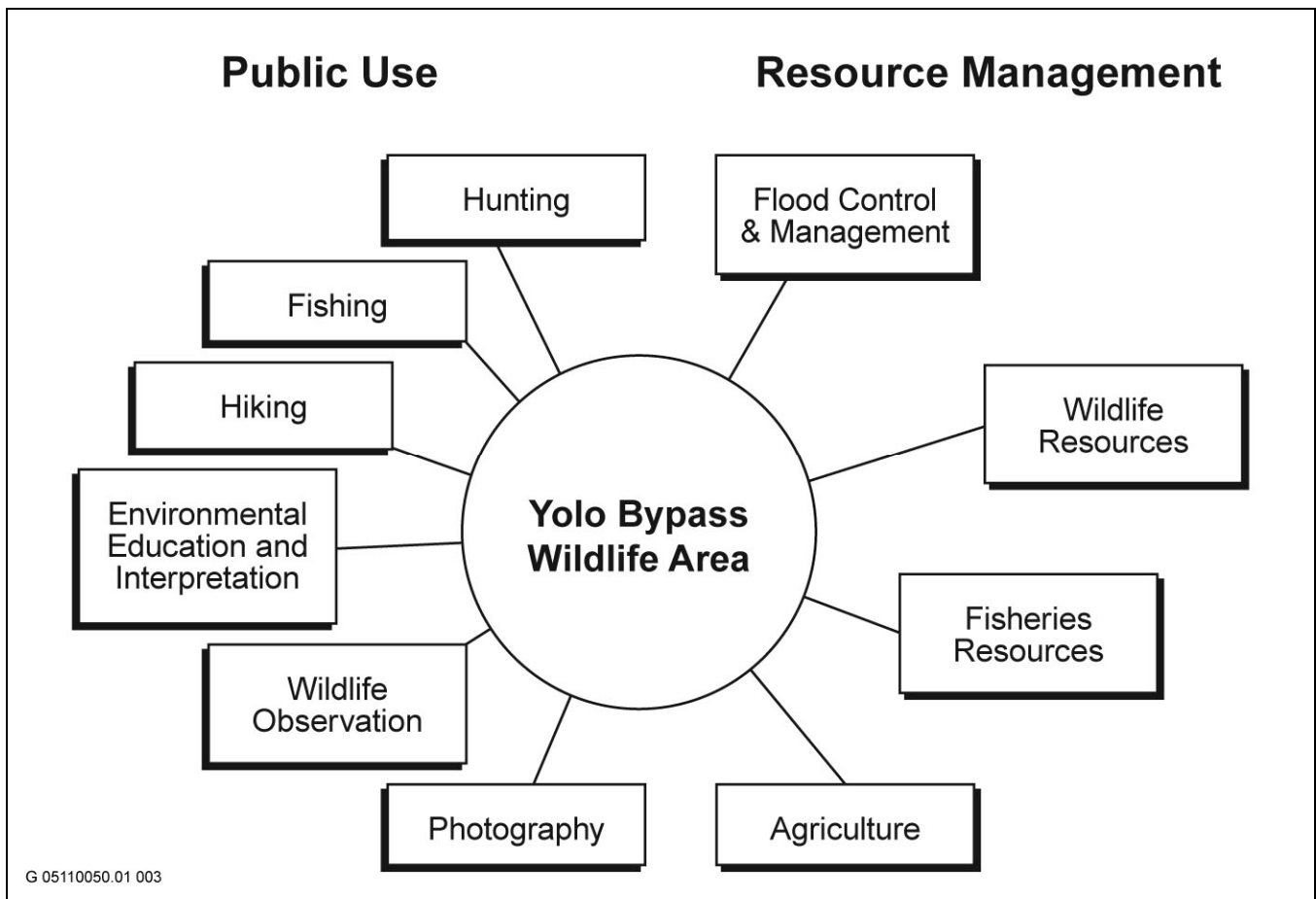
As depicted in Exhibit 4.1-1, four (4) resource management and six (6) primary public-use activities were determined to be compatible uses that could be supported in the management of the Yolo Wildlife Area. Compatible resource management activities in the Yolo Wildlife Area include flood control and management, protection and enhancement of wildlife resources, protection and enhancement of fisheries resources, and agriculture. Primary public uses include environmental education and interpretation, hunting, fishing, hiking, wildlife viewing, and photography. Existing beneficial uses and site improvements, including investments in infrastructure, were also considered in the evaluation. Exhibits 4.1-2 and 4.1-3 depict resource management activities and public uses occurring in the Yolo Wildlife Area.

## 4.1.1 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

### FLOOD CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT



The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is being managed with the recognition that the primary purpose of the Yolo Bypass is flood protection for the people of the Sacramento Valley. Flood flow design criteria for the Yolo Bypass indicate a specific water surface elevation when flood flows are at capacity. These criteria are maintained through the management of vegetation and hard structures in the Bypass in such a way that this water surface elevation is not increased. Emergent and riparian vegetation is maintained at acceptable levels as prescribed through the Supplement to the Standard Operation and Maintenance Manual for the Yolo Basin Wetlands (U.S. Army Corp of Engineers 2003). This prescription was developed through application of a hydraulic



**Compatible Resource Management Activities and Public Uses in the Yolo Wildlife Area Exhibit 4.1-1**

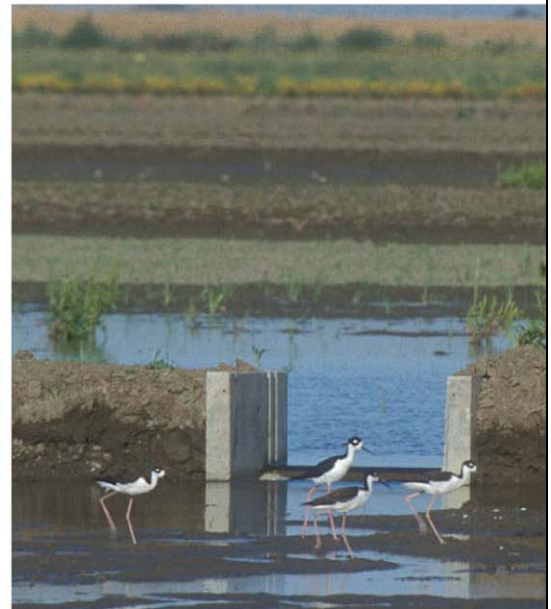
model. Anticipated topographic and vegetative changes were inputted into the model to predict their effect on water surface elevation. The primary tool for maintaining acceptable levels of emergent vegetation is timing and duration of flooding, and maintenance of existing vegetation through mechanical and chemical treatments. Generally, prevention is the best policy. Prevention of establishment of substantial stands of emergent vegetation and riparian vegetation is achieved by draining seasonal wetlands as close as possible to April 1. Management for floodwater conveyance will continue to be an overriding priority for the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area.

Recently, USACE has updated and improved a two-dimensional (2-D) detailed hydraulic model for the Yolo Bypass for determining flood conveyance impacts that may result from proposed ecosystem restoration projects. The new Yolo Bypass 2-D model (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 2006) provides the State Reclamation Board, DFG, and other restoration proponents with a useful tool to effectively evaluate the hydraulic effects on flood capacity of the Bypass, including the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. As the regulating agency, the State Reclamation Board will require DFG to provide hydraulic modeling of any future proposed restoration or any land-use modification projects in the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, which must confirm that the proposed project would meet performance criteria and not adversely affect the flood conveyance capacity. These modeling requirements apply to construction of any earthen structures that exceed 3 feet in height. Since most restoration efforts do not require berms above three feet, it is the management of these restoration projects that are subject to hydraulic modeling. Additional discussion on hydraulic modeling requirements is provided in Chapter 5, “Management Goals” and Appendix C.





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Photos Source: Dave Feliz

## Resource Management Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area

## Exhibit 4.1-2





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Photos Source: Dave Feliz

**Public Uses of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area**

**Exhibit 4.1-3**



## PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES



The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area provides important staging and wintering habitat for numerous species of waterfowl, shorebirds, and other birds migrating along the Pacific Flyway. These species are associated primarily with shallow flooded fields, ponds, wetlands, and mudflats. They are most abundant in the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area in fall and winter, when managed inundation for waterfowl also increases the availability of habitat for shorebirds (Page et al. 1992).

The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area also supports numerous species of raptors (e.g., northern harrier, red-tailed hawk, kestrel), songbirds (e.g., oriole, towhee, bluebird), and mammals (e.g., otter, raccoon, skunk, beaver, gray fox). Though not part of specific management objectives, the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area appears to be especially important to the Swainson's hawk, a state-listed threatened species that uses the floodplain as foraging habitat.

The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is a key component of the habitat restoration planned as part of the CALFED ERP, and is a vital element of the Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture's habitat restoration goals associated with implementation of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP). Millions of dollars in grant funding from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) have been invested in creating the infrastructure to manage wetland ecosystems at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. NAWCA was passed, in part, to support activities under the NAWMP. Accordingly, these grants are intended to support the conservation of wetlands and associated upland habitats needed by waterfowl and other migratory birds in North America. Importantly for Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area land use considerations, the wetlands created are required to be managed in perpetuity.

The stated purpose of the most recent land acquisition for the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area was "to allow for the preservation of historic wetlands, wintering habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, threatened and endangered species and other wetland associated species." Managing for fish and wildlife and their associated habitats on which they depend on, as well as compatible public uses, will be an ongoing priority for the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area.

### Flooding Effects on Recreational Activities

Flooding also has the potential to affect wildlife dependent recreational activities. Significant flooding during the hunting season (i.e., mid-October to mid-January) requires the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area to discontinue access to these areas, resulting in lost hunting time. When the Wildlife Area is closed due to flooding other public uses are prevented especially school field trips.

### Flooding Effects on Wildlife Resources



Flooding of the Bypass can affect management operations and thus, related wildlife resources. Floods damage infrastructure, requiring repairs and additional maintenance. Ditches and canals sometimes fill with sediment and need to be excavated to maintain flow capacity. In addition, debris deposited on fields needs to be removed; roads, field levees, gates, pipes, and pumps may need to be repaired. Permanent structures, such as pump stands can also be damaged by high water. Floods and their timing can adversely affect plant species composition (e.g., promotes growth of undesirable plant species like cocklebur), which may adversely affect waterfowl, pheasants, and other nesting birds (Yolo Basin Foundation 2001).

## PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF FISHERIES RESOURCES

The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area provides important year-round and seasonal aquatic habitat for a diverse assemblage of native and nonnative fish species when the Yolo Bypass floods. In more than half of all water years, excess floodwaters enter the Yolo Bypass (including the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area) from the main channel of the Sacramento River, creating up to 60,000 acres of shallow water habitat for native fish populations (Sommer et al. 2002). The importance of Yolo Bypass spring floodplain inundation for native fish passage, spawning and rearing, as well as estuary food web processes have been well documented (Schemel et al. 1996; Sommer et al. 1997; Sommer et al. 2001a; Sommer et al. 2001b; Sommer et al. 2002). Management for floodwater conveyance and the subsequent fisheries benefits generated by this flooding are part of the working environment at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area.

Recent studies and planning efforts have been conducted to examine the feasibility of managing a portion of the Yolo Bypass to improve habitat for multiple aquatic species, particularly native fishes such as Chinook salmon, Sacramento splittail, and green sturgeon (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the CALFED Bay-Delta Program 2002; Kirkland et al. 2005). Habitat improvement concepts are generally focused on winter and early spring floodplain inundation in one or more low-lying areas throughout the Bypass and fish passage improvements at Fremont Weir and on Putah Creek.

There is interest in pursuing habitat improvement for aquatic species (see Appendix A) and the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is generally supportive of such projects. However, Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area land use changes to benefit fish spawning, rearing, and passage in Putah Creek must be compatible with existing agricultural and/or managed wetland operations. As discussed above, the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is impacted by spring flooding in many ways, including decreased breeding success for ground nesting birds, decreased forage value of grazed areas, reduction of acreage available for farming and subsequent reduction of income for the Wildlife Area. Additionally, spring floods dramatically increase the establishment of emergent riparian vegetation, which requires subsequent vegetation control measures in order to remain compatible with habitat management strategies derived from hydraulic analysis. Future designs for created fish habitat on Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area land must be cooperatively planned with DFG as a primary lead agency with oversight authority. This would ensure that future proposals are mutually compatible with waterbird habitat management, agricultural activities, and other resource management functions of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. As the lead implementing agency for CALFED's Ecosystem Restoration Program, DFG must approve any CALFED funded proposed aquatic ecosystem restoration activities to insure consistency with ecosystem planning.

Proposals related to improving fish passage at Fremont Weir are not considered in this LMP as the Fremont Weir is located outside of the geographic boundaries of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. However, because modifications to Fremont Weir could effect management and operations at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, the effects on the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area would need to be considered in any discussions regarding potential project planning and implementation. These discussions would need to be inclusive of other stakeholders in the Yolo Bypass due to the potentially profound impacts to rice farming, grazing, wetland management, and flood protection. As always, the flood protection function of the Yolo Bypass should be maintained as a top priority.

Potential opportunities exist to restore and enhance fish habitat in the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area along Putah Creek and along the East Toe Drain at the southeast end (Tule Ranch unit) of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. Opportunities along Putah Creek include potential realignment of the creek channel to improve passage, geomorphic processes, and floodplain connectivity. The prospect of habitat enhancement in Putah Creek is especially attractive given the habitat improvement achievements upstream and the recent return of small chinook salmon runs in the creek.

Opportunities along the East Toe Drain include the potential creation of managed seasonal floodplain areas and tidal channels in the Tule Ranch Unit. These opportunities are consistent with particular project components/alternatives identified in past studies (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the CALFED Bay-Delta Program 2002;

Kirkland et al. 2005). For the Putah Creek channel considerations, proposed changes must be compatible with existing agreements, primarily the Putah Creek Settlement Agreement (Putah Creek Accord) which established minimum flow requirements in the Putah Creek channel to maintain a living stream for fish and riparian resources from the Putah Diversion Dam to the Toe Drain (Sacramento County Superior Court 2000; Moyle 2002). In order to determine if potential fish habitat restoration and enhancement opportunities are feasible, additional studies and coordination with local stakeholders including the Lower Putah Creek Coordinating Committee would be required.

## AGRICULTURE

Agriculture, including rice, row crops, and ranching, is an important component of the management of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area (see Exhibits 3.2-1 and 3.2-2). Agricultural operations provide important wildlife habitat benefits, critical income for Wildlife Area operations, maintain vegetation in a desired and compatible state, and contribute toward the local farming economy. Since the acquisition of the Glide and Los Rios properties, Wildlife Area staff has creatively incorporated agriculture into the management of the Area. Agricultural operations are expected to continue to have a significant presence at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area.

### Flooding Effects on Agricultural Operations



Late spring flooding in the Bypass has a substantial detrimental effect on farming operations. Floods affect crops in a variety of ways. Floods in April–June can damage or destroy crops planted during dry periods in March–May. When this flooding happens, it is usually too late to replant those fields with a different crop. If the ground remains too wet to work until May or June, the shortened season results in limited crop options and decreased yields (Yolo Basin Foundation 2001). The reduction of agricultural productivity on the Wildlife Area translates into a reduction of income generated for the management of the Wildlife Area.

### Flooding Effects on Infrastructure

The maintenance of infrastructure, including roads, canals, drainage ditches, diversion structures, pumps, and wells, is done on an as-needed basis, often in response to flood damage. Roads are sometimes eroded and require regrading or rebuilding. Some canals and ditches fill with sediment deposited from floods and require periodic excavation to maintain necessary flow capacity. East-west trending canals and ditches often create eddies and other hydraulic disturbances that can cause erosion and deposition of sediments and deposition of flood debris, such as tree limbs, agricultural vegetation, and irrigation pipes, in fields and canals. Such debris conditions can necessitate extensive cleanup efforts (Yolo Basin Foundation 2001).

## 4.1.2 PUBLIC USE

The following public activities are entirely compatible with the ecosystem restoration goals of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area and the flood control function of the Yolo Bypass.

### ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION

The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, in partnership with the Foundation, supports popular and extensive environmental education and interpretation programs. Field trips for classes ranging from local elementary schools to area colleges and universities allow for a “hands-on” appreciation of the ecosystem including wildlife, fisheries resources, vegetation, cultural resources, agriculture and flood hydrology.



Each year, through the Discover the Flyway school program, the Foundation trains hundreds of teachers and hosts over 4,000 K–12 students and parents from Sacramento, Solano, Yolo, Placer and El Dorado counties. Since the program began in 1997 over 20,000 students have had the opportunity to visit the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area through this program. Foundation and DFG staff, interns and volunteers assist students in hands-on learning activities as they lead students on exploratory Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area walks (Yolo Basin Foundation and California Department of Fish and Game 2007).

Unique education programs like Marsh Madness, which targets underserved schools, and Nature Bowl are also offered. In addition, the Foundation provides community programs such as the Flyway Nights speaker series, and monthly tours of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. The Yolo Basin Foundation is the sponsoring non-profit organization for California Duck Days. It publishes the Yolo Flyway newsletter and brings wetlands education to the classroom with the Wild About Wetlands kits. The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area partnership with the Yolo Basin Foundation and support of environmental education programs will continue to be a priority and is memorialized in a Memorandum of Understanding (see Appendix D). An document was recently prepared by the Foundation and DFG that identifies the history and overview of programs in the Wildlife Area (Yolo Basin Foundation and California Department of Fish and Game 2007) (see Appendix E).

### **Pacific Flyway Center**

The proposed Pacific Flyway Center, initiated and coordinated by the Foundation in partnership with DFG and WCB, would be a unique visitor and education center located on a 69-acre site in the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area outside of the SRFCP levees. This facility would allow the Foundation's and DFG's educational and public outreach programs to expand to meet the needs of future generations.

The proposed Pacific Flyway Center would be a 12,000 square foot educational facility that would serve as the new headquarters of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, while hosting 5,000 school children a year who would learn about the Pacific Flyway. The Flyway Center would highlight the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area and utilize the management of this area to illustrate the mission of the DFG. A central theme of the programming for this project would be the value of wetlands in the Central Valley as a critical component of the Pacific Flyway. Farming for both people and wildlife would be highlighted as a critical habitat component of the area as well as for its tremendous economic value. The building would contain exhibition spaces, meeting rooms, site observation areas, multipurpose educational facilities, and parking. A separately funded adjacent 45-acre restored habitat area would serve as an "outdoor classroom" complimenting the educational function of the Pacific Flyway Center building.

### **HUNTING**

Hunting has historically been a popular seasonal use of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. There is approximately 5,000 acres currently open for hunting; principal game species include several species of ducks and geese, ring-necked pheasants, and mourning doves. The public hunting program includes accessible hunting facilities (e.g., roads and blinds) and a junior hunt program for kids. The hunting season runs from the opening of dove season (i.e., September) through January (or flood inundation). The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area currently has a daily capacity ranging from 35–75 hunters in the free roam area (depending on acreage flooded and local agricultural activities), plus assigned blinds. The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area currently manages a total of 16 blinds in the Northeast Unit (see Exhibits 2-1 and 3.7-2).

Much of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is closed to all non-hunting purposes from two weeks before waterfowl season to one week after waterfowl season. Areas designated for wildlife viewing purposes are open on most days throughout the year. Travel is restricted to designated roads and parking lots. Roads may not be passable for large vehicles such as motor homes, and such vehicles are not permitted. Bicycles and hunting dogs are allowed in the hunting areas during hunting season.

Opportunities for increases in blinds and expansion of designated hunting areas exist in limited areas throughout the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area and will be developed as funding for their construction, operation, and maintenance becomes available. Currently one blind is available with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) access for limited mobility hunters.

## **FISHING**

Fishing in the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area focuses on the adjoining East Toe Drain, although there are potential additional fishing opportunities in Green's Lake, Putah Creek, and permanent wetlands (see Exhibits 2-1 and 4.1-2). Fishing for sturgeon, striped bass, black bass, bluegill, green sunfish, and catfish in the East Toe Drain tends to attract the most interest. The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area has limited opportunities for "walk-in" fishing; most activity is on the Toe Drain from the east levee of the Sacramento River Deep Water Ship Channel outside of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area boundary. Access to fishing opportunities will continue to be provided. There are additional opportunities to install ADA-accessible fishing piers at select locations along the East Toe Drain, including sites accessible only from West Sacramento.

## **HIKING**



While hiking opportunities are limited at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, due to sensitive habitats and agricultural operations, there are opportunities available along wildlife viewing tour routes and in the grassland areas of the Tule Ranch Unit (see Exhibit 2-1 and 3.5-1). All trails are located on the crest of berms created for the impoundment of water in managed wetlands. The attractiveness of hiking is greatly enhanced by the opportunity for wildlife viewing and general appreciation of the beauty of the expansive basin. There is a popular hiking trail connecting parking lot B and C. Another trails leaves from lot D. Miles of hiking routes are available from lot F except during hunting season. Trails are not paved and often are not graveled as well.

## **WILDLIFE VIEWING**

The opportunity for wildlife viewing is substantial. The rich environment of seasonal and permanent wetlands, agricultural fields, upland grasslands, vernal pools, and riparian forest supports a very wide range of wildlife species. The potential for bird watching is especially great due to the wide variety of and abundance of avian species that frequent the area in different seasons. Opportunities exist to expand and create new wildlife viewing tour routes that would expand wildlife observation options in the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. Wildlife viewing accessibility is seasonal in many areas, essential to avoiding conflicts with hunters, livestock, and agricultural activity. It is possible to provide some limited bicycle access for wildlife viewing purposes.

## **PHOTOGRAPHY**

The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area offers opportunities for photography of wildlife species and the general environment. The expansive mosaic of habitats and abundant wildlife provides a substantial and diverse range of photographic possibilities. The potential exists to develop photographic blinds for public use.

## OTHER PUBLIC USES

The public-outreach component of the planning process identified interest in several other public use considerations, including:

- ▶ establishing equestrian trails,
- ▶ establishing an access route from West Sacramento,
- ▶ allowing bicycle access and establishing connections with regional bicycle-trail planning efforts, and
- ▶ allowing overnight camping.

The potential for the use of portions of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area for these recreation uses was reviewed. It was determined that regional equestrian trails could pass through the area but horse riding would not be considered a primary recreational activity at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. Additional bicycle access uses could potentially be accommodated and they may be considered on an individual basis. These types of uses would likely require the establishment of a partnership with another agency for development and operation of such facilities. The DFG is happy to consider involvement in regional trail planning efforts but will not take the lead on such efforts. Overnight camping is currently not being allowed because of the flood hazards inherent in a flood control channel.

Other public-use options were evaluated as part of the planning process but were determined to be incompatible with the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area for various reasons. These included:

- ▶ off-road vehicle use - potentially detrimental to the unique and sensitive habitat and the wildlife resource;
- ▶ buildings - not physically suitable to the frequently flooded environment;
- ▶ unlimited equestrian and bicycle use - potentially detrimental to the unique and sensitive habitat and the wildlife resource;
- ▶ dog trials - incompatible with Wildlife Area purpose;
- ▶ parachuting - potentially detrimental to the unique and sensitive habitats and the wildlife resource; and
- ▶ developed park and sports facilities – incompatible with DFG mission.

## 4.2 WILDLIFE AREA REGULATIONS



The regulations guiding public use of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area are provided in Title 14 (“Natural Resources”) of the California Code of Regulations. Division 1 of Title 14 includes regulations that have been formally adopted by the California Fish and Game Commission, reviewed and approved by the Office of Administrative Law, and filed with the Secretary of State. The current regulations applicable to the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area include Regulations for General Public Use Activities (Section 550), which are applicable to all wildlife areas. They also include Hunting, Firearms, and Archery Equipment and Permit Requirements (Section 551), which contain hunting regulations that relate to

all wildlife areas as well as use regulations that apply specifically to the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. In addition, standard hunting and fishing regulations apply to the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area.



Although the regulations that govern public use of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area are expected to change over time, a summary of the current regulations is provided to inform the reader about the current situation. The following summary of the regulations that apply to the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area does not reflect all requirements in detail. The most current and complete regulations should be consulted for any determination related to the use of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area.

#### **4.2.1 GENERAL PUBLIC-USE ACTIVITIES**

These general requirements set basic standards for protection of all wildlife areas and protection of public safety. The Regional Manager has authority to establish additional regulations for wildlife areas that are not otherwise provided in Sections 550 and 551. The following regulations for general public-use activities are currently applicable to all wildlife areas, including the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. Where regulations require a specific action by DFG to be applicable, the status of any such action is noted in italics.

- ▶ DFG may specify entry locations, limit entry, or close wildlife areas to protect resources or public safety. Specified public notice is required of such entry limitations or closure. Entry locations, limitations, and closures have been established and may vary depending on seasonal management activities and flood control/management conditions.
- ▶ Use permits are required for organized events or gatherings.
- ▶ Motor-driven vehicles are not permitted except on public roads, parking areas, or other routes designated by DFG.
- ▶ Trailers are not permitted on the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area
- ▶ Drivers must comply with all posted traffic signs.
- ▶ DFG may restrict the use and operations of boats in Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area waterways.
- ▶ Certain activities are not permitted for the protection of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area and protection of public safety. These prohibited uses include:
  - damage or removal of property owned by others;
  - deposit of litter, rubbish, toxic substances, or other materials;
  - damage to plant materials;
  - removal of soil, sand, gravel, rock, etc.;
  - collection, disturbance, or removal of bottles or other artifacts;
  - livestock grazing, except by lease; Existing leases for grazing and farming have been maintained
  - taking fish or frogs for commercial purposes.
- ▶ Hunting and fishing are permitted subject to regular open seasons and regulations and the special provisions of Section 551.
- ▶ Dogs are allowed only for hunting or only when under immediate control. DFG may prohibit or restrict the use of dogs (with the exception of assistance dogs).
- ▶ DFG may eject a person from the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area for specified reasons.
- ▶ Users are responsible for knowing area-specific regulations in Section 550.
- ▶ Access to the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is closed between sunset and sunrise.

- ▶ Access to the Wildlife Area is closed when the Fremont Weir spills and/or when the Area is flooding from other local sources.

## **4.2.2 HUNTING, FIREARMS, AND ARCHERY EQUIPMENT AND PERMIT REQUIREMENTS**

This section contains general regulations related to hunting and firearms that apply to wildlife areas in general. It also contains specific regulations that apply to the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. These specific regulations are in addition to the other requirements of Sections 550 and 551. They are intended to respond to the unique characteristics of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. The general regulations applicable to all wildlife areas include:

- ▶ Raptors may be used to take legal game in accordance with general hunting regulations.
- ▶ Possession and use of firearms and archery equipment is permitted only for hunting purposes.
- ▶ Hunting Regulations for Waterfowl, Upland Game, and State and Federal Areas that apply to the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area can be obtained from:

California Fish and Game Commission  
1416 Ninth Street  
Sacramento, California 95814  
Online at: <http://www.fgc.ca.gov/html/regs.html>

As previously noted, it is anticipated that the current regulations will change in the future as DFG continues to monitor the public use of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area and proposes appropriate responses to changed circumstances.

## **4.3 COORDINATION TO SUPPORT RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC USE**

Because the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is part of a mosaic of publicly managed habitat within the larger Yolo Bypass, coordination with other agencies is a key to providing the best and most cost effective resource management and public-use opportunities in the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area and throughout the Yolo Bypass in general. While the various agencies have different functional niches and procedures, a cooperative environment has been established through an inclusive approach to both the creation and management of the Wildlife Area by the Foundation and DFG. This environment has been maintained by the scope and tone of the Yolo Bypass Working Group meetings. Additional technical work groups have also been established to focus on more specialized topics (e.g., hydraulic, fisheries resources). The need for a permanent management-coordination organization has not been established.

Coordinated planning and regulatory consistency is an important objective for the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. This includes coordinated flood management and control, resource and agricultural management planning, and consistency between the public use regulations that currently apply to the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. Coordination with the Sacramento Yolo Mosquito and Vector Control District is very important as control of mosquitoes, especially with the arrival of West Nile virus, is crucial due to the proximity of a large urban population. Coordinated planning also includes being consistent with the regulations that govern the public use of other publicly and privately managed properties. The development of a comprehensive planning effort for the entire Yolo Bypass offers the opportunity to make resource management and public use of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area and the Yolo Bypass as a whole as seamless as possible. Support for this type of effort is incorporated into this LMP. As with any relationship, communication is the vehicle by which cooperation is achieved. Management of the Wildlife Area will continue to speak frequently with flood protection and vector control personnel, local farmers, and other resource management agencies on a daily basis.

## **4.4 SUPPORT OF RESOURCE ENHANCEMENT AND PUBLIC USE**

As the population of Yolo, Sacramento, and Solano counties, which surround the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, and of California in general continues to increase, the demand for public recreation use will continue to grow. With increased access and use, stresses placed on natural resources of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area will likely also increase. This LMP anticipates the opportunities and issues that may arise and identifies the management actions that will be required to address them to adequately support compatible resource enhancement and public recreation use of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. A complete program of goals and follow-up tasks to achieve the goals is contained in Chapter 5.

### **4.4.1 REGULATION ADJUSTMENTS**

As the circumstances surrounding the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area change over time, adjustment of the regulations that govern public uses may be required. The revision of these regulations requires approval of the California Fish and Game Commission. A review of the regulations by Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area management staff every three years coincides with the review cycle of the Fish and Game Commission and is appropriate to ensure that regulations remain current.

### **4.4.2 PUBLIC INFORMATION**

A common theme raised during public outreach for the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area LMP was that additional information sharing is needed to enable people to make better use of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area for compatible recreation uses. Information to improve public knowledge of resource management and public-use opportunities in the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area should be a coordinated effort among DFG, the Foundation, and other public land management agencies and organizations. It should include:

- ▶ online information regarding public access locations, compatible resource management, and public use opportunities;
- ▶ a hard-copy brochure and posted maps to identify public-access lands and compatible public uses throughout the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area; and
- ▶ a signage program for improving public access and identifying Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area key regulations.

### **4.4.3 COORDINATED ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION EFFORTS**

The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area LMP is based on an ecosystem approach to habitat management consistent with the principles of the CALFED ERP. Although the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is not managed specifically for any special-status species, this LMP is intended to contribute to the recovery of special-status species as well as the maintenance of other native and game species using specific management techniques along with natural processes to create a sustainable system over the long term (refer to Appendix B, “Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area–Related Targets and Programmatic Actions from the CALFED Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan”). In addition to CALFED, the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is committed to coordinated ecosystem restoration efforts with other organizations throughout the Yolo Bypass and in the region.

### **4.4.4 REGIONAL TRAIL CONNECTIONS AND ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS**

Improved and expanded trail connections and public access opportunities are needed to support regional planning efforts and compatible public uses. This need was commonly expressed as part of public-outreach meetings that were included in the planning process. Consistent with the purposes of this LMP, improvements should include:



- ▶ additional land access points where a substantial public-use potential exists;
- ▶ low impact parking areas and pedestrian use of low impact access roads at key locations; and
- ▶ incorporation of access roads and/or trails in future restoration project areas, when compatible.

The primary purpose of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is the conservation of habitat for wildlife, and very limited public access improvements are proposed. The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is composed of frequently flooded property with sensitive habitats and agricultural leases, and access is limited in this area. In compliance with applicable state and federal laws, DFG will accommodate the accessibility of the Wildlife Area for persons with disabilities, including potential planned facilities. To fully support compatible public uses and concurrently protect habitat and wildlife resources, designated staffing and an operations and maintenance budget will be required.

#### **4.4.5 COOPERATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS**

During the public-outreach component of the planning process, stakeholders expressed concerns that resource management and public use of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area could result in effects on adjoining lands. In response to these concerns, Chapter 5 includes a number of strategies to mitigate the types of concerns that were raised.

These actions will include direct communication with neighbors, continued communication through the Working Group, signage throughout the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, access controls, and coordinated management of existing lands and design of future restoration projects.