

**Meeting Minutes  
Yolo Bypass Working Group  
Meeting 37**

**MEETING DATE:** June 5, 2006

**LOCATION:** California Department of Fish and Game  
Yolo Wildlife Area Headquarters  
45211 County Road 32B (Chiles Road)  
Davis, CA 95616

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Charlie Alpers, US Geological Survey (USGS)  
Brad Burkholder, Department of Fish and Game (DFG)  
Casey Walsh Cady, California Department of Food and Agriculture  
Regina Cherovsky, Conaway Ranch, RD 2035  
Mark Cocke, City of Woodland  
Jack DeWit, DeWit Farms  
Linda Fiack, Delta Protection Commission  
Craig Isola, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)  
Dave Feliz, DFG Yolo Wildlife Area  
John Fritz, Sacramento Yolo Mosquito and Vector Control District (SYMVCD)  
Chris Fulster, Glide In Ranch  
Karen Gerhart  
Tom Harvey, USFWS  
Michelle Hladik, USGS  
Mark Kearney, Landowner  
Dave Kohlhorst, Glide-In Ranch  
Dennis Kilkenny, Dawsons Duck Club  
Marianne Kirkland, Department of Water Resources (DWR)  
Dean Kwasny, DFG  
Steve Macaulay, California Urban Water Agencies  
Steve Mahnke, DWR  
Cindy Matthews, National Weather Service (NWS)  
Julia McIver, Yolo County  
Selby Mohr, Mound Farms  
Sally Negroni, Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Michele Ng, DWR  
Jack Palmer,  
Michael Perrone, DWR  
Bob Rooker, SYMVCD  
Don Stevens, Glide-in Ranch  
Jeff Schuette, DWR  
Ed Towne, Bullsprig Outing  
Jeanette Wrysinski, Yolo County Resource Conservation District  
Mariko Yamada, Yolo County Supervisor, District 4  
Dave Ceppos, Center for Collaborative Policy (CCP)  
Robin Kulakow, Yolo Basin Foundation (Foundation)

## Meeting Introduction

Dave Ceppos called the 37th meeting of the Yolo Bypass Working Group (Working Group) to order. The Working Group was started five years ago with funding from the CALFED Bay-Delta Program (now the California Bay Delta Authority, [CDBA]). The group continues to be funded through CBDA. It is the primary forum for Yolo Bypass (Bypass) issues, specifically on Bypass conditions as related to landowners, tenants and regulatory entities that have a direct responsibility or land ownership responsibility in the Bypass.

Mr. Ceppos reviewed the previous meeting minutes and adopted them as final after receiving no requests for changes

### Fremont Weir Sediment Removal Project and Bypass Levee Maintenance

Michelle Ng of DWR described the proposed activities at the Fremont Weir. The last sediment removal below the Fremont Weir was done in 1992. Ms. Ng described where sediment will be removed. DWR contractors will concentrate their work on the west side of the Weir. The sediment is about 3 feet deep. They won't get into the existing depressions. The goal is to set up the area so it can be mowed by DWR. The project will open for private companies to bid on June 6, 2006. Sediment will be spoiled outside the levee and Wildlands Inc. may farm it. DWR estimates about 800,000 cubic yard of material will be moved. The sediment has accumulated at a more rapid rate than usual due to limited maintenance associated with budget constraints in the Bypass.

Q: What kind of maintenance cycle will there be?

A: Maybe ten years. They now have a baseline budget for Fremont Weir sediment removal. Sediment drops out when water goes over the weir. Sand and silt drop out just below the weir. Fines drop out farther down.

Q: Who determines what sediment projects will be done?

A: It is a risk management decision. Based on what is most important for public safety?

Q: Is DWR looking at a new Operations Manual?

A: DWR would have to do that with the US Army Corps of Engineers.

Steve Mahnke and Jeff Schuette from DWR spoke about levee maintenance on Yolo Bypass levees. After the flooding last winter, people are noticing the wave erosion. DWR manages levee maintenance from Fremont Weir to Highway 16 as well as levees south of the Willow Slough Bypass. The worst erosion was on unit 4 (near Yolo Causeway on West side of Bypass). They are planning to place large rock to prevent damage from wind erosion (there are 4 foot swells at times). A lot of areas have rock from a long time ago but it is small cobble and not as resistant to the wave action. Large angular rock is needed. DWR is just starting a project description for necessary environmental compliance through California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements Unit 4 is about 3 miles long.

Q: Why do waves affect the west side of the Bypass?

A: The southwest wind pushes it up everywhere. The east side of the Bypass has large rock already in many places and so is generally more resistant to wave action. The northwest levee has a lot of vegetation. The worst area of levee erosion is between the Union Pacific Railroad tracks and I-80.

They are still trying to figure out which sections to do. DWR may have to do mitigation for giant garter snake habitat as a result of proposed work.

### **West Nile Virus Conditions and Regional Vector Control**

John Fritz from SYMVCD led this discussion. Last year there were 177 human cases in the Sacramento area; Davis had 12 cases. Hopefully the peak was reached last year. The District doesn't know what will happen so they are preparing for the worst. Two dead birds have been counted so far. The District thanks the refuges and duck clubs for waiting until October to flood up last year. They will ask for the late flood up again this coming fall. John introduced Bob Rooker to the group. He will be working with Yolo Bypass landowners.

Q: Are you treating brood ponds?

A: They will be inspected to evaluate whether treatment is needed.

### **Delta and Yolo Bypass Mercury Research Proposals**

Charlie Alpers of USGS spoke about two Yolo Bypass mercury research proposals that have been submitted by the USGS, DFG, and Yolo Basin Foundation along with other partners. He described mercury cycling briefly. It is one of the more complicated chemical processes in the environment. It is the only metal that can vaporize. The main sources of it are from gold rush era gold mining sediments moving down the Sacramento River Watershed and tailings and runoff from mercury mines in Cache Creek. The problem is that mercury accumulates in predatory fish that are eaten by wildlife and humans. Methylmercury is the organic format that enters the food chain. Sampling of water flow in and out of wetlands is an important first step in understanding the problem. The proposed mercury regulations for the Delta will require the development of Best Management Practices (BMP's). The overall goal is to look at the formation and export of mercury and methylmercury from rice fields and wetlands that then moves on through the Delta. They will look at other chemicals that could be influencing mercury production in wetlands. They will look at root zones, vegetated vs. nonvegetated wetlands, and methyl mercury in bird eggs. The consolidated proposal submitted to CALFED is titled: "Methylmercury cycling and export from agricultural and natural wetlands in the Yolo Bypass" There are five key questions to be looked at. Determine:

- 1) If and to what extent seasonal and annual methylmercury production and export loads differ for the dominant wetland types in the Yolo Bypass: non-farmed wetlands, white-rice fields farmed annually, and fields undergoing a 3-part rotation regime.
- 2) To what extent specific management practices lead to any observed differences in mercury cycling and export;
- 3) If differences in wetland habitat types result in measurable differences in methylmercury bioaccumulation in aquatic invertebrates; and
- 4) The underlying processes that lead to any observed difference in mercury cycling among wetland types or best management practices.

The benefits from this project include:

- a) Providing critical data on land use and BMP's;
- b) Finding that can be used to improve BMP's that will minimize the bioaccumulation of methylmercury in sensitive bird populations that use the Yolo Bypass as critical habitat,

- c) Public/educational outreach regarding land use, mercury cycling, and mercury bioaccumulation in sport fish,
- d) Regional, national, and global transferability value of the project's findings.

Another part of this proposal would look at giant garter snake use of wetlands and rice fields in the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. Mercury accumulation in giant garter snakes would also be sampled. *(Note: In July, DFG, USGS and the Foundation were informed this proposal was not funded)*

Mr. Alpers also described a sampling schedule. He said that photodegradation is related to demethylation. Chris Fulster noted that his concern is that wetlands will be shut down. He said that they (the landowners) didn't cause the problem. Dave Ceppos explained that the mercury issue is a regulatory issue that is coming and will continue to affect landowners and tenants in the Bypass. The two biggest problems facing wetland managers are West Nile Virus and methylmercury.

Dave Feliz added that we all agree that wetlands have many benefits and that public and private wetlands managers are trying to get the word out about the methylmercury issue. He further stated that specialists don't know which factors are causing the problem. It appears from some research results that open water may be helping to demethylate. It is not business as usual if we want to restore more wetlands in the Yolo Bypass. Don Stevens noted that he has the same concerns as Chris. This will impact landowners. He is concerned that the mercury issue is getting out of hand. He doesn't know of any one who has been harmed. Dave Feliz said that we would like to continue research. We need to learn about it. There is some evidence from recent research that methylmercury is affecting some stilt egg production. Linda Fiack said that landowners are mandated to consider this issue. There is no turning back. Lake and Yolo County have already dealt with Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) on Cache Creek. The DPC formed a collaborative group to assess the problem and they continue to meet about this. DPC members are learning about the issue. She encouraged people to refer to the DPC website to learn about the DPC's activities relating to mercury production. Letters of concern to the Central Valley Water Quality Control Board are also posted on the website.

A second proposal with similar goals was submitted by USGS to the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board. This proposal looks at only mercury not the giant garter snake. Charlie closed by giving a further update on the current work of USGS in the Bypass. They have an active mercury sampling program going with funding from the Sacramento River Watershed Project.

### **DWR Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Implementation**

Marianne Kirkland with DWR gave an update of the work of her group. They are looking at base line data for the Yolo Bypass; establishing a flow gauge at Knights Landing Ridgecut; looking at low flow rates; looking at sediment settling at the Fremont Weir. Up to 4 inches settled out this year. They are sampling to determine what contaminants may be in the sediment.

### **Yolo Bypass Datum Adjustment**

Cindy Matthews of the NWS described there are about 75 gages in the San Francisco-San Joaquin Delta and Bypass. Some are telemetered. They are owned by different agencies. All of these agencies have changed their datum to the NBVE 1988 single point reference for North America. Now DWR is changing to 1988 single point reference also. Sea level will mean the same thing everywhere in US. Datum will change on October 1, 2006. This is important information for Yolo

Bypass operations. Referring to a handout, Ms. Matthews explained how they will change the datum. By example, at the Lisbon Weir the monitor stage and flood stage will drop by 1 foot. There is not a change occurring north of Bryte. Gages are recalibrating so water will be the same but the number will be different. She explained an analogy to how time changes during daylight savings time. Historical data will be at old value so conversion factors will be needed to compare old and new data. The Rio Vista stage will also be revised.

Q: Will the emergency responders know of the change?

A: The Fremont and Sacramento Weirs will stay the same so it does not affect flood stage assessment.

### **Update on Yolo County Integrated Regional Water Management Planning Process (IRWMP)**

Jacques DeBra, City of Davis Public Works and Chair of the IRWMP Technical Advisory Committee described the IRWMP. The IRWMP is an update to the 1984/1982 Yolo County Water Plans. It is funded in part through Proposition 50. The project is managed by the Yolo County Water Resources Association (WRA). The scope includes Yolo County watersheds and the surrounding areas. There has been a lot of stakeholder involvement. Robin Kulakow, Dave Feliz, Marianne Kirkland, Chuck Dudley and Jack DeWitt participated in stakeholder meeting. Jacques presented information on the planning process and where they will be going next. Many different actions have been proposed by groups all over Yolo County. These projects have been grouped into integrated projects when appropriate. He suggested that the Yolo Bypass Working Group could get involved in the implementation of the Yolo Bypass Integrated Project. In order to do this he anticipates that the Working Group would have to adopt of more formal structure and a process for decision making. Dave Ceppos noted that at past Working Group meetings a more formal structure for the group has been discussed. No action was taken as a result of past discussions. People liked the current ad hoc structure. Dave suggested putting the issue on the next Working Group meeting agenda. Dave Feliz asked Jacques to describe some of the proposed Yolo Bypass actions. DFG has submitted some proposed actions relating to the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. Selby Mohr stated that there needs to be people at the table that can make decisions for their agencies and organizations. Dave Ceppos noted that this is not a five minute discussion and it is important to schedule a meeting to talk it over.

### **Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Management Planning Process Update**

Dave Feliz described the public involvement process for developing the plan. There was a public scoping meeting in December 2005. There were 5 stakeholder focus meetings in March and April 2006. All of these meetings have resulted in a draft plan. The goal is to have a public draft Land Management Plan out for a 30-day public for comment this summer. The Plan will be on the Yolo Basin Foundation and DFG websites around June 14. CDS will be available as well. Chris Fulster asked about hunting south of the old Sacramento Northern train trestles on the Tule Ranch. He wants a closed zone next to the levee. He asked about ditch repairs at the south end of the Wildlife Area. DFG will repair flood damage to the ditch. Dave asked people to read the draft plan when it is available and send comments to his email.

### **Proposed Delta Vision Process**

Linda Fiack gave out a handout for discussion purposes only. The Little Hoover Commission Review of the California Bay Delta Authority (CBDA) prompted discussion of a Delta vision. This is an attempt to create a 100 year vision for the Delta in general not just for CBDA implementing

agencies. DPC is getting landowners involved in the discussions. The co-leaders of the visioning process are the Secretary of Resources, Mike Chrisman and Secretary of Business, Housing and Transportation, Sunne McPeak. A Blue Ribbon panel is evolving. Information on the Delta Visioning process is posted on the DPC website. Linda anticipates that the governor will come out with a directive to start a 100-year vision. Counties are doing general plans the State Department of Parks and Recreation is doing a plan for a Central Valley vision: these are all underway. The groups need to share their visions.

Steve Macaulay noted that there is strong interest for a Delta vision process among a wide range of stakeholders. The upcoming Delta Vision Conference at UOP is sponsored by Delta water agencies, DWR, and many others. A Delta Vision process, initiated by the Schwarzenegger Administration, is likely to be very comprehensive in scope, covering water, fisheries, land use, utility corridors, etc. Jack Palmer noted that this process is more important than any other that the Working Group has addressed. What happens in the Delta will have long term effects on the entire Central Valley.

Linda Fiack and Dave Ceppos and Steve Macaulay described the upcoming Delta Vision Conference. Linda also gave an update on Senator Torlakson's bill on creating a Great Delta Trail network connecting existing public facilities. It passed off Senate floor. See the DPC website for stakeholder comments on the trail idea. It would be a network of public access opportunities. Dave Ceppos gave kudos to Linda for taking a leadership role for many issues and noted that there is a lot going on. Dave Feliz seconded what Dave said. He recently gave a presentation to the Delta Protection Commission on the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Land Management Plan and the Commissioners asked insightful questions. Steve Macaulay told the group that Tom Zuckerman who represents the Central Delta Water Agency is involved in the Delta Vision discussion and they should consider inviting him to the next Working Group meeting.

### **Update on Lower Yolo Bypass Collaborative Stakeholder Planning Process**

Dave Ceppos discussed this effort. The process is going to happen however there are some additional contracting steps that need to be done. It's being sponsored by YBF, DFG, and DPC. Robin and Linda will be taking a leadership role. The Working Group will be a direct conduit for public input and particularly for duck club participation. The process will likely seek the focused participation of 2 duck club representatives to sit at table as negotiators. They will report back to Working Group since there is no formal waterfowl association in the Bypass like the Butte Sink and Suisun RCD groups. For the purpose of the project, the Lower Bypass is defined as extending from the DFG Yolo Wildlife Area down to Rio Vista. Including levees on both sides and the RDs associated with those levees. Linda Fiack stated they are looking forward to starting the process and Robin confirmed the Foundation's commitment to keep everyone informed. Brad Burkholder from DFG echoed these comments

### **2006 Flood Season and Impacts to Bypass Landowners / Managers**

The full group discussed this. The Wildlife Area is open now. Field work is going on. The Area lost about 1,000 acres of rice and about 2/3 of rice income worth about \$100,000k. Tomatoes are in and will hopefully be productive. Food plots are going in. Safflower won't be ready for dove season maybe for pheasant season. Sudan grass will be available.