

**Draft Minutes
Yolo Bypass Working Group
Meeting 39**

**December 15, 2006
10:00 to 12:00.**

**Yolo Wildlife Area Headquarters
45211 County Road 32B, Davis**

IN ATTENDANCE: Robin Kulakow, Yolo Basin Foundation (Foundation)
Dave Ceppos, Center for Collaborative Policy (CCP)
Carol Atkins, Department of Fish and Game (DFG)
Mike Bradford, Hunter / Outdoorsman”
Joel Buettner, Sacramento Yolo Mosquito and Vector Control District
(SYMVCD)
Regina Cherovsky, Conaway Ranch, RD 2035
Jack DeWit, DeWit Farms
Mike DeWit, DeWit Farms
Robert Eddings, California Waterfowl Association (CWA)
Tasmin Eusuff, Department of Water Resources (DWR), Division of Planning
and Local Assistance
Linda Fiack, Delta Protection Commission
Dave Feliz, DFG, Yolo Wildlife Area
Paul Forsberg, DFG
Chris Fulster Jr., Glide In Ranch
Dick Goodell, Glide In Ranch
Andrea Jones, Yolo County Board of Supervisors, Office Supervisor Yamada
Dave Kohlhorst, Glide-In Ranch
Greg Kukas, US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
Teresa Le Blanc, DFG, Lands Program
John Legakis, Senator Outing
Rick Martinez, Farmer, Triad Farms
Zoltan Matica, DWR
Julia McIver, Yolo County
Selby Mohr, Mound Farms
Robert Moore, California Bow Hunters, SAA
Bob Schneider, Tuleyome
Julie Simpson, Larry Walker Associates
Ted Sommer, DWR
Don Stevens, Glide-in Ranch
Jeanette Wrynski, Yolo County Resource Conservation District

1. Introductory Comments

Dave Ceppos, Facilitator from CCP noted that this meeting marks the end of CALFED funding for the Yolo Bypass Working Group (Working Group). CALFED has funded the group for eight years. Dave asked for comments on the minutes of the previous meeting. Don Stevens noted a correction

that needs to be made: the Canada goose limit is four not seven. The minutes were adopted as final with the one correction.

2. Completing the Yolo Wildlife Area Land Management Plan (LMP) – Current Status and Final Steps (Dave Feliz, DFG)

The LMP sets the framework for long-term management of the Yolo Wildlife Area (YWA). DFG staff at the regional level are still reviewing the LMP administrative draft. The Lands and Facilities Branch has reviewed it and now all that is needed is the blessing of the Regional Manager. DFG is reorganizing its regions for the first time in many years. Region 3, the Central Coast Region is merging with the Bay Delta Office. The new Region 3 will include the San Francisco Bay, Suisun Marsh/Grizzly Island and the YWA. The new regional manager needs to review the LMP before it goes out for public review.

Dave highlighted some features of the plan. There is a long list of planning influences that DFG needs to coordinate with. Flood control efforts and policies have all been looked at and incorporated in the LMP. The management setting includes previous commitments to the Sacramento River Flood Control Project, the YWA's Memorandum of Understanding regarding management for flood control and endangered species, Glide Ranch commitments, the DFG/Foundation MOU regarding public access programs, and agreements with the Dixon Resource Conservation District and the SYMVCD. The plan is organized by elements, goals, and tasks to carry out the goals. There are ten elements including biological resources, public use, and fire. The Operations and Maintenance section includes tasks needed to carry out all of the management goals. This section is used to develop the budget needed to achieve the LMP goals. Dave referred to the shorebird management goals as an example. The LMP includes a matrix with tasks and hours needed to do them. This is a way of calculating personnel needs. It details what it will take to implement the plan. Paul Forsberg asked if this is something new for YWA? Dave said yes and that he did a similar exercise at San Jacinto Wildlife Area in 1989. He doesn't know if other wildlife areas go through this exercise. The plan calls for approximately 14 permanent staff. Currently the YWA is operating with 3 permanent staff.

Chris Fulster asked Dave to define closed zone versus sanctuary. The public is not allowed access to the sanctuary area. The closed zone is closed to hunting but open to wildlife watching. There area about 500 acres currently set aside for wildlife viewing, 3,000 acres open for hunting, and 400 acres of sanctuary. Pintails are concentrating in 400 acres of rice adjacent to I-80. What you are seeing from I-80 is a narrow area next to the freeway. There is a proposed closed zone at the south end of the YWA adjacent to the duck clubs. There is a NAWCA project planned for next year next to that south ditch. That area won't be hunted. A participant asked if dredging of the ditch just south of I-80 is still in the plan? Yes, the construction of this ditch will continue, although it will probably be built with scrapers, rather than excavators.

Selby Mohr asked how will the plan be implemented? What can this group to help you? Dave noted that funding is needed to implement the LMP. Farming income is \$300,000 in a good year. The YWA budget includes about \$100,000 from the Cigarette Tax, \$250,000 from the environmental license plate fund and \$187,000 from the Pitman Robertson tax on ammunition. That makes total funding about \$800,000/year. Dave Ceppos asked if an advocacy group were to try to generate a letter or letters of support for the needed budget---would that be helpful? Dave Feliz said would be very helpful during implementation later in the year. The Working Group has a lot of credibility within DFG. Dave Ceppos suggested that we should have a meeting of the Working Group after the plan comes out to plan strategy to support the LMP. Don Stevens, a retired DFG employee noted that the State Department of Finance is key to getting funding. Theresa Le Blanc commended Dave Feliz

for putting together the LMP, noting that it is a huge effort. The LMP is needed to justify positions. Every year DFG goes to the Department of Finance with budget proposals. Robin Kulakow and Dave Ceppos said that they can work on a strategy for support letters. Robin Kulakow pointed out that comments can be positive. They don't have to be all negative. Linda Fiack said that getting word out about the public comment period is important for getting support from the Delta Protection Commission. Support has to come from stakeholders. Selby Mohr asked if we can sign as stakeholders of the group. He suggested that a topic for the next Working Group meeting is how do we as stakeholders sign letters supporting the LMP. Can we sign as a group since it is hard to get signatures?

Dave Feliz reviewed recent waterfowl survey data. Overall there were more ducks in the Sacramento Valley in 2005 than 2004. Surveys are indicating that there are more ducks in the Valley in 2006. Please see the attached survey data for more information.

Dave Feliz also reviewed the current hunting program at the YWA. The Northern Pintail is the Pacific Flyway bird. The YWA is open 2 hours before shoot time, which is now about 4:30. Hunters can get reservations by mail, lottery from night before, and sweat line. This has been a very poor pheasant year all over. Less than 100 birds. Blinds are the best hunting. Rice fields north and east of Greens Lake is open for hunting. Please see the attached document for recent hunting results for the YWA.

Dave Feliz discussed a research project that DFG and SYMVCD worked on last year. The study looked at different types of vegetation removal versus no removal and the associated effects on mosquito populations. The data showed that mosquito populations were lower where there was less vegetation. These same ponds had more midge larvae, which are a beneficial food source for waterfowl and shorebirds. The study results will be published in a vector control research journal.

According to Dave Feliz the LMP does not have a map of changes in land use. The maps and descriptions are at a more conceptual level. They don't show where every pond is going to be etc. The LMP identifies priorities. Things are falling in place for managing the YWA for the long term. Current rice fields will probably stay in rice infrastructure. The infrastructure is very versatile and DFG and the farmers have invested a lot on money in it. DFG is planning to widen the wildlife viewing loop. This will give people the chance to see the rice fields and associated water bird use. The food plot/irrigated area will stay for income or food and will be in the hunt area. DFG will maintain cattle leases in the vernal pool area of the Tule Ranch. On the Tule Ranch there will be areas dedicated for irrigated pasture. This creates good nesting habitat for ground nesting birds and high value forage for cattle. There is a tidal area at the southeast corner, which is creating a freshwater tidal marsh. This marsh will be enhanced with constructed sloughs, swales and varying topographic features. A re-routing of Putah Creek is planned to enhance salmon passage. Farmers are using much of the route already for irrigation. Some riparian restoration along Putah Creek will be proposed. DFG will continue to grow safflower for doves. No irrigation system exists in the safflower fields. One field on the Tule Ranch had sunflowers planted and irrigated. This was followed by the placement of cows in this field for grazing. The cows knocked down most of the sunflower which then became available for dove and dove hunters.

Jeanette Wrynski asked if there will be any movement away from managing invasive species like water grass. Dave Feliz said that he is not sure what ducks fed on in the undisturbed natural state, possibly Santa Barbara sedge, bulrush, creeping wild rye. DFG does manage for these natives. They also work with farmers on weed control. The shorebird rotation grows invasive weeds and then they are disced in before they set seed. DFG is definitely working with farmers. The natural hydrology

doesn't exist so its hard to manage for what was once here. Most of wetland management is managing invasive species that are good waterfowl food. Natural hydrology couldn't be recreated unless people move out of the floodplain. Jeanette said that much of the Yolo County RCD's work is managing nonnative invasive weeds. Water grass plots could be converted to natives for example. Dave said that he is not sure how to get rid of water grass/swamp timothy since the ducks plant it every year and the flooding brings it in. One example of native plant management is the late summer flooding of fallow rice fields, which seems to encourage the proliferation of alkali bulrush. In 2006, this practice resulted in large numbers of snow geese using these fields.

3. The Yolo Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) Subcommittee (Dave Ceppos, CCP and Working Group members)

The IRWMP was initiated by the Water Resources Association of Yolo County (WRA) with funding from DWR Division of Planning and Local Assistance (DPLA). Tasmin Eusuff is representing DPLA. There is a lot of regional competition for DWR funding. In the past there has been no regional coordination. DWR was being put in the position to make regional decisions but they thought that should be a local decision. The IRWMP process was started to address the need for regional cooperation on funding requests. In the Yolo County IRWMP there are different integrated projects based on subregions / watersheds in the county. An integrated project is a collection of proposed projects/ideas within a specific subregion. WRA recognized that there are already localized stakeholder groups such as the Working Group and therefore came to Robin Kulakow because of the success of the group. They asked if the Working Group could prioritize projects within the Bypass. Dave Ceppos and Robin Kulakow advised that it could be done if there was a formal decision making process for the Group. CCP has a contract with DWR so they were asked to help organize a subcommittee of the Working Group that is able to make IRWMP-related recommendations.

Dave Ceppos distributed the IRWMP executive summary and portions of the chapters that relate specifically to the Yolo Bypass Integrated Project. The plan is to create an equitable group of stakeholders with fair decision-making abilities for one stop "shopping" for the IRWMP. The Working Group Subcommittee does not replace the Working Group. It will rely on the Working Group. Subcommittee meetings will be coordinated with Working Group meetings. Subcommittee members will listen to Working Group stakeholder concerns on proposed projects, then the Subcommittee will meet to prioritize projects. Priorities can change over time. Please see the handout describing consensus with accountability. He reviewed some aspects of the proposal such Subcommittee commitment to communicate with other similar implementation partnerships. He also reviewed a proposed stipulation that allows any stakeholder the option to pursue Bypass actions independent of the Subcommittee if deemed necessary after sufficient collaboration. For example DFG has certain regulatory mandates they have to follow. The Subcommittee can't force any entity to participate in projects that do not meeting regulatory authorities. The Subcommittee membership proposal was reviewed by Dave Ceppos. The group attending the focused Working Group meeting on this topic held November 28, 2007, approved his proposal.

Regina Cherovsky, Ron Tadlock, Tom Schene, Dick Goodell, Selby Mohr, Phil Martinelli, Mike Hardesty, Heidi Rooks from DWR Environmental Services, DFG Fisheries, Dave Feliz, Robin Kulakow and a representative from CWA and Ducks Unlimited will make up the Sub-membership. Yolo County said that they will try to get someone there.

Bob Schneider wants to see representatives of the California Sports Fishing Alliance, Tuleyome, Yolo Audubon, Sierra Club, and an environmental justice group represented on the subcommittee. Tuleyome looks at recreation, etc. Dave Ceppos asked if would Bob would agree to having

additional Yolo Bypass stakeholders participate on the Cache Creek group to provide equal balance. He said no because they are already represented. Julia McIver with Yolo County said that WRA has directed co-leads to prioritize projects within Yolo Bypass integrated project. Once this is done prioritization goes to the next level to either the WRA Technical Committee or the WRA Board of Directors. Selby Mohr asked if this next level is the step where larger interests, beyond the Yolo Bypass, get involved. What is the balancing act between local versus larger interests? Dave Ceppos noted that the WRA has created implementation projects but the next step is not defined yet. Julia McIver said that what Bob Schneider is addressing is the next step after the geographic group meets. That has not been defined by the WRA. Dave Ceppos wants to find an equitable solution. He said he was glad that Tasmin is here to hear this discussion. He will talk with the WRA and DWR about how to handle Bob's concerns.

4. The "State of the Bypass" – "Where we are...where we've been...where we're going" (Dave Ceppos and Everyone)

Robin Kulakow had the idea for a "State of Bypass" discussion as a way to do a report back to the Working Group summarizing what issues have been discussed at Working Group meetings and what the status of the issues is. The Working Group meets about quarterly and we have not done a summary in quite a while. Dave distributed a draft State of the Bypass report saying that it is only a start and not intended to be comprehensive. We intend to send another version. Several people attending this meeting will update the group on their specific issues and this information will be incorporated into the draft report.

Two Dimensional (2D) Hydraulic Model of the Yolo Bypass

Greg Kukas with the USACE gave a short report on the status of the 2D hydraulic model for the Yolo Bypass. The USACE has an operational model now and is working to test it on a case study located on the YWA. The modeling effort has a long history. Six years ago the USACE applied for grant funding to develop a 2D model for improved planning, design, and permitting of Yolo Bypass projects. This is considered to be the best way to optimize land use decisions. Work on the model started a few years ago. The USACE now has a model that is available for use. They need to complete a users' manual and case study. This is a tool for optimizing restoration and flood control.

It can convey localized hydraulics of a grid section by looking at the existing water surface elevations and then analyzing the potential affects of proposed changes, modeled and then compared to existing conditions. The Working Group gave a lot of support for the effort by providing stakeholder input to the needs of project proponents. Some technical challenges with the model remain. Staff changes at the USACE means that the model is about 6 months behind time. A case study analyzed by EDAW was used in development of the LMP. DFG or others can use this model by hiring an engineering consultant with the expertise to run such a model. USACE staff has been working with the State Reclamation Board staff to make sure it fits permitting needs. In response to a question, Greg confirmed that RMA2 (the specific model for the 2D) does allow for water quality applications. Dave Ceppos noted that development of the model is a milestone. This model is a good example of how the Working Group has been able to give landowners multiple tools for land management decisions. This means better business applications. Surface water elevation is probably the most important factor for analyzing effects of proposed projects. The USACE hopes to finish the model and the instruction booklet in the spring. The USACE has been meeting with the Modeling Technical Advisory Committee facilitated by the Yolo Basin Foundation to make sure the model meets the needs of project engineers.

Regina Cherovsky gave an update on the Conaway Ranch. The Ranch partners settled the lawsuit with Yolo County on September 7. The Ranch will stay in private hands. Regina said this is a great thing for private landowners and for working with governmental agencies. The settlement requires that Conaway work more closely with Yolo County. For the first time in the 16 years that she has worked there the Ranch is in the best position for moving forward. Current landowners have made a big investment for the future. They are interested in preservation. The main thing about this is that it is still a rice farm. Selby Mohr asked about the long range use of the Ranch's water. Existing regulations covering water sales will be followed. Conaway Ranch is a partner with the City of Davis and UC Davis for surface water in the future if there is extra water. The Yolo County website has the complete settlement document. Regina encouraged people to look at the website. At this point they are still farming but more dialogue will take place.

Delta Protection Commission

Linda Fiack, Executive Director of the DPC is looking forward to further collaboration with the Working Group on a variety of topics including the mercury TMDL and the Lower Bypass Collaborative Process. The Delta Protection Act and the Commission's Management Plan support agricultural conservation easements in the Delta to promote permanent protection in the Primary Zone. The development of a Bay Delta Conservation Plan is underway by the Resources Agency. The DPC is working to ensure that county plans are taken into consideration in the development of the Bay Delta Plan.

Linda gave a short update on the Delta Vision process. The Executive Cabinet has met. A Blue ribbon task force will be announced. Members will be appointed by the Governor. There is a stakeholder group being put together also. DPC has been involved in the governance structure and providing names for committees. This should all be announced in the near future. DPC applied for working landscapes grant for projects throughout the Delta. These will be pilot projects to highlight wildlife friendly agriculture.

The Governor signed the Delta Trail Bill this fall. Stakeholder meetings have started including agriculture and water, habitat and environment, local interests and private industry. The planning process will start when funding is in place. Formation of a technical advisory group and stakeholder group will start soon. Delta Trail network: What are opportunities and challenges? Linda asks participants to email her with any concerns (lindadpc@citlink.net)

A Discover the Delta nonprofit has been formed. They are doing a visitor center. Exhibits will highlight projects/groups throughout the Delta. Groundbreaking will be soon.

A Mercury collaborative is underway to look at technical aspects of the proposed mercury TMDL for the Delta and to provide comments to the Regional Board. DPC is not a permitting agency but serves as an appeal body.

Earth Justice and the Concerned Citizens of Clarksburg have appealed approval of the Sugar Mill project approval by Yolo County. There will be a Jan 25th hearing to look at consistency with the Commission's Management Plan. DWR is having stakeholder meetings on how to spend bond money.