

Draft Meeting Notes
CALFED Bay-Delta Program North Delta Improvements Group
May 24, 2001 at 9:30 am in room 1142

Attendance List:

Margit Aramburu, Delta Protection Commission
Joe Balkan, KCRA News
Bill Betchart, private citizen
Marina Brand, Fish and Game, Bay Delta Unit
Brad Burkholder, Fish and Game, Bay Delta Unit
Mike Callahan, San Joaquin County Public Works
Robert Clark, CCFVCA
Rob Cooke, CALFED
Gil Cosio, MBK Engineers
Craig Crouch, Sacramento County
Bill Darsie, KSN Engineering
Rich Dixon, Fish and Game, Region II
Aimee Dour-Smith, Jones and Stokes
Mike Eaton, The Nature Conservancy
Bellory Fong, CALFED
Walt Hoppe, private citizen
Gwen Knittweis, CALFED (chair)
Grant Kreinberg, SAFCA
Gil Labrie, DCC Engineering
Roger Lee, DWR Flood Management
Doug Morrison, USBR
Michael Norris, DWR Central District (minutes)
Bob Nozuka, DWR Central District
Sally Shanks, Staten Island
Dave Showers, DWR Central District
Jim Smith, EBMUD
John Thomson, FWS
Kevin Tillis, Hultgren-Tillis Engineering
Topper VanLoebenSels, RD 551, NDWA, and DPC
Chuck Vogelsang, CALFED
Karl Werder, USBR
Peter Yolles, The Nature Conservancy

Previous Meeting Minutes:

Gwen Knittweis convened the meeting and had the group introduce themselves. There was one comment on the previous 2-22-2001 meeting minutes. Topper VanLoebenSels had a comment on a reference to water diversions on the fourth paragraph on page 2 of the previous meeting minutes.

Report on Update of North Delta Program Implementation:

Gwen Knittweis presented the first agenda item dealing with an update on the North Delta Program Implementation. The consulting firm of Jones and Stokes was brought on board to prepare the EIR/EIS for North Delta Improvements and Aimee Dour-Smith of Jones and Stokes was present to give a more detailed explanation of how the study will be conducted later in the meeting. Gwen showed an overhead on the North Delta Program Project Organization that showed who is doing what and what groups we have. Gwen also pointed out that the group is working with Sacramento County so that our EIR/EIS can be coordinated with theirs. It is thought that it was best to scope out the two projects together.

Report on the EIR/EIS Preparation Process:

Aimee reviewed the environmental process that is expected for the North Delta report. A handout was distributed. The goal is to reduce the duplication of efforts and bring ecosystem restoration actions up to speed. Aimee noted that they would be tiering from CALFED Programmatic EIR/EIS and following ERP guidance for ecosystem restoration and Multi-Species Conservation Strategy (MSCS). Various overheads were shown. The overhead for Figure 2 showed the Alternative Development and Screening Process. Aimee noted that one of the key elements is to define a project purpose. In addition, there will be some public workshops conducted. The overhead for Figure 3 showed the EIS/EIR Process and it was noted that they would be looking to do public scoping along with Sacramento County.

It was noted that a reconvening of the North Delta Agency Team is being sought. Robert Clark asked about the agencies involved in that process and Rob Cooke reviewed the eight or so agencies he is aware of that have regulatory concerns in the North Delta.

The timeframe for scoping was discussed. Scoping could occur about 3 months from now according to Aimee. There is a meeting scheduled for 5-30-01 to discuss coordination of the schedules.

Sally Shanks asked about coordination with San Joaquin County and Aimee noted there was coordination occurring. Rob noted a presentation he gave to the Walnut Grove Rotary and how it was well received. Mike Callahan from San Joaquin County Public Works was present to give a few comments.

Report on an update on Staten Island / McCormack-Williamson Tract Activities:

Mike Eaton from the Nature Conservancy presented the next agenda item dealing with an update on the Staten Island / McCormack-Williamson Activities. Mike has worked with CALFED in the past on the purchase of properties to achieve ecosystem restoration, conveyance, and floodwater management. McCormack-Williamson Tract has been purchased and the proposal is to open it up to serve more as a floodway and tidal marsh. Staten Island is important for Sandhill Cranes and an acquisition is being sought there. There is a project underway to re-slope about one mile of interior levee on McCormack-Williamson with the intent being to move the toe drain inland and achieve a 5:1 slope. Existing on-site borrow is being used and the low bid was \$360,000.

Mike noted the acquisition of Staten Island for \$30 million is being sought. The figure for the 9,200-acre property includes the capital equipment and residences. It is sought to have a single-owner island with transfer to a non-profit entity as well as a continuation of wildlife-friendly farming activities. Robert Clark had a question about taxes in the future and Mike noted the Williamson Act tax rate would apply if it were kept in farming.

John Morrison asked a question about the possibility of keeping both tracts of land under single ownership. Mike noted that TNC would own it for at least 3 years. TNC is comfortable with being the interim owners while the various issues get worked out. Topper VanLoebenSels asked a question about the possibility of the county losing the tax base since the properties are so large. Mike noted a land transfer to a government agency would probably raise the most objections. Topper suggested creating a trust to preserve the tax base.

Report on Delta Region Ecosystem Restoration Implementation Plan:

Marina Brand from the Department of Fish and Game presented the next agenda item dealing with an update on the Delta Region Ecosystem Restoration Implementation Plan. The Ecosystem Restoration Unit is a DFG-CVBDB unit that is the project lead for this activity. The Ecosystem Restoration Plan is being prepared as a coordinated effort among DFG, USFWS, NMFS, and CALFED. Originally it was intended that the Ecosystem Restoration Plan focus on the southern portion of the Delta. However, the unit received direction from CALFED Management in January of this year to prepare an Implementation Plan that addressed the entire Delta rather than focusing on just the southern portion. Therefore, the focus shifted from the south Delta to the entire Delta. The unit is looking into taking all CALFED information that is available and refining this information by looking at other information sources such as local land use, ecosystem conservation, and restoration plans as well as looking into other programs like AB360 and CVPIA. Also, some White Papers will be considered. The groups focus will look at the difference between “what has been done to date versus what is proposed to be done in the CALFED documents”. The ecosystem plan that will result will have a very strong scientific component. In addition, there will be an “Adaptive Management Feedback Loop”. The plan will be updated annually or BI-annually. Marina noted that it is hoped to have a draft plan by late fall. Marina is hoping to work with a few people who can focus on the North Delta and who can work closely with Jones and Stokes.

Sally Shanks asked about the scoping boundaries and Marina noted it is the legal Delta except that a portion of the marsh that is within the legal Delta is excluded.

Report on an update on Hydraulic Modeling / Status of Related Projects:

Gwen Knittweis presented the next agenda item dealing with an update on the hydraulic modeling for the North Delta. CALFED is now in a position to bring a contractor on board who can figure out the mechanics of how the modeling will be done. There was a handout on some draft language describing the need for modeling. Margit and Sally discussed fine-tuning the language describing the need for the modeling to say it more clearly. Grant Kreinberg noted that SAFCA has authorization from the federal government but did not get the funding for this year although they will try for it next

year. In addition, Grant discussed a supplemental EIR that is being done because the current EIR did not address about 100 Elderberry bushes on the project site. Grant projected a date of 4-15-02 at the soonest before work could proceed. There was another project that Grant discussed as well that will be part of the Mokelumne-Cosumnes Feasibility Study but that project may be three years off according to Grant.

Craig Crouch noted that he would be before his board in about mid-July requesting an advance of funds for Alternatives 11E/11F. The projects will be coordinated with the CALFED North Delta Improvements although the work may proceed before the North Delta Improvements get implemented. Craig also noted the need to create a Reclamation District (RD) to operate the facilities since we also are creating some new levees. There are also some talks underway with some existing RDs about possibly expanding their boundaries.

Under "related projects", Gwen noted that Ron Ott would be giving a talk in Walnut Grove that afternoon on the results of the Delta Cross Channel Re-operation.

Discuss Next Meeting Date and Agenda/Other Issues:

Gwen scheduled the next meeting of the group for the morning of June 28, 2001. The meeting that was pre-scheduled for July 12th will be cancelled for right now but the August meeting can stay on for now. Craig Crouch offered to give a presentation for Sacramento County.