

Meeting Notes
NORTH DELTA IMPROVEMENTS GROUP MEETING
Wednesday, May 18, 2005
9:30-11:30 a.m. at Jones & Stokes (2600 V Street)

ATTENDANCE LIST:

Burkholder, Brad	California Department of Fish and Game
Clamurro, Lori	Delta Protection Commission
Clark, Robert	California Central Valley Flood Control Association
Crouch, Craig	Sacramento County Water Agency
Darsie, Bill	Kjeldsen, Sinnock & Neudeck, Inc.
Dutton, Bill	US Bureau of Reclamation
Elliott, Chris	Jones & Stokes
Hoppe, Walt	Point Pleasant
Knittweis, Gwen	California Department of Water Resources (DWR), North Delta
Kreinberg, Grant	Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency
Labrie, Gil	DCC Engineering
Martin, Sara	Jones & Stokes
Mello, Steve	Reclamation District 563
Ray, Dan	DWR, North Delta
Schmutte, Curt	DWR
Simons, Rachel	East Bay Municipal Utility District
Trieu, Don	MBK Engineers
Van Loben Sels, Topper	North Delta Water Agency and Delta Protection Commission
Whitener, Keith	The Nature Conservancy

HANDOUTS

- Meeting Agenda
- Meeting Notes from the April 6, 2005 meeting
- Project objectives handout
- North Delta Mike 11 modeling results handout packets – weir height variations

1. INTRODUCTIONS – Gwen Knittweis, DWR

Gwen Knittweis welcomed everyone to the meeting, facilitated a round of introductions, and introduced DWR North Delta's new staff environmental scientist, Dan Ray. The position had previously been held by Collette Zemitis, who departed to take a position with CalTrans in Bishop. Dan Ray has a wealth of experience on big projects around the country, as well as with CALFED. He is well suited to help bridge conversations between CALFED and the project team. He is a welcome addition to the project team.

Other project-related updates from Ms. Knittweis included:

- No new developments in the search for project implementation funding. The project team is exploring a vast array of possibilities in order to get the project funded and built. One of Ms. Knittweis' ideas is to look at the potential funding sources and work with potential funders to emphasize project elements that would be most attractive to and competitive for the perspective funds sources.

- Recent discussions with the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency (SAFCA) have been going well, as SAFCA's new Executive Director, Stein Buer, was a leader in the North Delta Program back in the late 1980s and early 1990s when it also included DCC modification. He managed the preparation of the DRAFT 1990 North Delta Program EIR. He offered several ideas for modifying the project for better economic feasibility for the Project team to consider including: investigating the use of an erodable weir at the northern end of Staten Island, reconsidering flooding the entirety of Staten Island, and expanding the project's benefits to include water supply by selling the water collected on Staten Island during flooding.
- SAFCA, Sacramento County, and DWR will reconvene the Hydraulic Modeling Coordination Team (HMCT) before the next NDIG to address questions regarding the MIKE 11 model.

2. ALTERNATIVES COST ESTIMATES – Chris Elliott, Jones & Stokes

At the last NDIG meeting, Ms. Knittweis indicated that a more in-depth look at estimating the costs of the North Delta project elements. A contract for Jones & Stokes to put together an engineer's estimate and look at maintenance costs is under development. Chris Elliott (Jones & Stokes) explained that although cost estimates do not inform the environmental analysis at all, they do provide a good way to analyze the anticipated benefits of a project. In the meantime, Jones & Stokes has reviewed DWR's initial cost estimates (developed in 2003) and applied them to the current project alternatives. These very preliminary estimates (which do not include any ecological restoration elements) range from \$20 million to \$50 million for actions on McCormack-Williamson Tract, and from \$100 million to \$130 million for actions on Staten Island. The gaps will be filled in, and the numbers will be updated and refined by Jones & Stokes.

Grant Kreinberg asked if these estimates could be pegged to an established index. Ms. Knittweis assured him that the unit costs were obtained by DWR's Department of Engineering which uses industry standards, and Mr. Elliott said that such indices will be used in the development of the new cost estimates.

Bill Darsie asked if the estimates would be for construction costs only. Mr. Elliott responded that the estimates will include construction costs as well as long-term operation and maintenance costs. All costs will be based on 2005 numbers and projected forward to the estimated construction dates. Mr. Elliott encouraged meeting attendees to call (916.737.3000) or e-mail (celliott@jsanet.com) him if they had any questions regarding cost estimation.

Mr. Kreinberg asked if different estimates would be set up for different levels of incremental benefit (e.g., would they state that for X amount of money, X amount of flood conveyance could be achieved, and for Y million more, Y amount of flood conveyance could be achieved). He also asked if the National Economic Development (NED) guidelines had been used to set up the estimations. Ms. Knittweis answered that the 2003 cost estimations were not set up using the NED guidelines, as DWR had their funding cut for the NED analysis. Mr. Kreinberg indicated that he would like DWR to explore the NED issue some more, as a NED analysis would be required if the Army Corps of Engineers were to provide any funding for the project. He then asked if the Bureau of Reclamation (Bureau) required a NED analysis as well. Bill Dutton responded that the Bureau requires a similar analysis for funding. Mr. Kreinberg advised that a NED analysis, or something similar, might be necessary to pursue any federal funding. Craig Crouch agreed, and pointed out that a NED analysis would be useful in obtaining federal funds, as well as in providing a means of evaluating the relative

benefit of project alternatives and rationalizing why certain project elements were not pursued further.

Mr. Crouch then expressed his concern that the project alternatives were already subject to artificial constraints, such as broaching the potential to alter the 100-year floodplain. He feels that the project team needs to make sure that no limits are placed on the project before development's effects are understood. He suggested analyzing the effects in the open instead of burying the discussion in a restriction. Mr. Kreinberg suggested that a way to ensure future development does not reduce the benefits of the project is to obligate development interests to commit in agreements that any development that would increase flows or runoff would need to build corresponding detention.

3. PROJECT PHASING STRATEGY – Gwen Knittweis, DWR and Chris Elliott, Jones & Stokes

In the previous NDIG meeting, the project team announced to the stakeholder group that it was considering phasing to be responsive to funding opportunities. The following phases were proposed:

Phase 1

- Ecosystem restoration options on McCormack-Williamson Tract
- Grizzly Slough restoration
- Dredging on Mokelumne River
- Potential relocation of the New Hope Marina

Phase 2

- Staten Island flood control options
- Maximized dredging and levee-raising

Mr. Elliott explained that phasing would also allow flexibility to adjust project components in phase 2 based on changes caused by phase 1. He then reviewed the project objectives for each phase:

Project objectives for **Flood Control, both phases:**

- Convey flood flows to the San Joaquin River without immitigable stage impacts.
- Reduce the risk of catastrophic levee failures based on the 1997 event for stage and the 1986 event for volume.

Project objectives for **Flood Control, Phase I:**

- Control flood waters coming through McCormack-Williamson Tract in a way that minimizes the surge effect; i.e., avoids the historical condition where a large pulse of water from McCormack-Williamson Tract adversely affected adjacent island levees (e.g., Tyler and Staten Islands) and downstream flows, and knocked boats loose from local marina moorings in flood events.

Project objectives for **Flood Control, Phase II:**

- Provide flood control benefits to I-5 and the project area by achieving stage reduction, targeted at a water surface elevation below approximately 16.5 feet at Benson's Ferry and below approximately 12.0 feet at New Hope Landing, based on the 1997 event for stage and the 1986 event for volume.

Project objectives for **Ecosystem Restoration, both phases:**

- Implement scientifically driven pilot programs to restore ecologic, hydrologic, geomorphic, and biologic processes and self-sustaining habitats, including freshwater tidal marsh, seasonal floodplain, riparian, and other wetland habitats.
- Support special-status species.
- Limit exotic species establishment.
- Promote foodweb productivity.

Project objectives for **Ecosystem Restoration, Phase I:**

- Promote natural flooding processes and tidal action.
- Promote processes to increase land surface elevations in areas of subsidence.

Project objectives for **Ecosystem Restoration, Phase II:**

- Expand available floodplain area within the leveed channel.
- Minimize potential effects on greater sandhill cranes.

Project objectives for **Recreation, both phases:**

- Enhance public recreation opportunities in a manner that does not compromise flood protection infrastructure or operations, compromise habitat integrity, or disturb wildlife.

Ms. Knittweis explained that under the phased approach, the majority of stage reduction at Benson’s Ferry would be achieved during Phase I (McCormack-Williamson modifications), whereas the majority of stage reduction for New Hope would be achieved during Phase II (Staten Island/ Lower Mokelumne River modifications).

Regarding the objective for Flood Control, Phase II, Mr. Crouch offered that it might be more acceptable to state that the goal is to “reduce stage approximately 2 feet” as opposed to identifying a specific water surface elevation (stage), which needs to be tied to some frequency. Mr. Kreinberg agreed, stating that changing it might make it more understandable to the general public, and that identifying specific stage is useless without tying it to a frequency. Ms. Knittweis agreed to identify the statistical frequency of the historical events in the text.

Regarding the Ecosystem Restoration objectives, Mr. Kreinberg thought something should be added to the ecosystem restoration objectives about preventing habitat loss. Mr. Elliott pointed out that there is an objective relating to minimizing impacts to cranes, and asked if there were any other specific species concerns. Steve Mello suggested adding simple language, such as “Minimize potential effects on greater sandhill cranes, other species of concern, and their habitats.”

Regarding the Public Recreation objective, Mr. Kreinberg asked if recreation opportunities should be limited to “public”—he feels that “private for fee” recreation or “entrepreneurial” recreation opportunities could be added. He also suggested simply stating “enhance recreation” so that future options are not limited. Curt Schmutte responded that CALFED has not looked too favorably on private gain associated with public funds. Mr. Kreinberg recommended that DWR not limit themselves at this point, and remove the word “public”. Emphasis should be on the desired effect, and does not need to preclude the relocation of the marina.

4. STATEN ISLAND TECHNICAL ISSUES – Gwen Knittweis, DWR

Ms. Knittweis handed out a short informational description of weir height variations on Staten Island. It explains that the MIKE 11 model was used in simulations varying weir height from 10-

foot down to 6-foot (in Flood Control Option #1) to more accurately understand the hydrodynamics and the flood benefit potential of using Staten Island as a detention basin. The simulations showed that basin storage increases substantially as weir height is lowered. It continues:

“Stage benefits at New Hope are realized, but little stage reduction is experienced at Benson’s Ferry, and nearly nothing [changes] upstream of Benson’s Ferry at Twin Cities and McConnell. Point Pleasant received minor stage benefits primarily from the reduction in stages south of Lambert Road.”

Ms. Knittweis stated that although a 6-foot weir leads to the greatest amount of detention, it might not be feasible to construct a weir that low because it would need to be operable or capture tidal flows, and it would necessitate whole-island detention. Whole island flooding would have some construction cost savings in not needing to build a DSOD-approved cross-levee, but it would still require a substantial amount of effort to protect all banks and infrastructure on the island, as well as to deal with seepage issues.

Another technical issue relating to modifications on Staten Island is County road access. When the island is flooded, the County road at the north end of the island must still be passable for use during emergencies. In addition, the bridge crossing the North Fork Mokelumne River requires 500 feet of sight distance on either side. This sight-distance requirement may mean that the Staten Island weir would need to be shortened.

A new technical idea for Staten Island modifications would be the “erodable crest” weir suggested by Stein Buer. With a weir that erodes itself as flows increase, it allows for a natural timeline of island inundation. Ms. Knittweis informed the group that Hultgren-Tillis was preparing a cost estimate to research the feasibility and design of an erodable crest weir.

Regarding the hydraulic modeling results, Keith Whitener pointed out that the weir height simulations were done using only Flood Control Option #1. Although Flood Control Option #1 shows the greatest reduction in stage, it is also the most expensive option. It would also have a tremendous effect on farming operations and pose many technical challenges for TNC. He feels that DWR should be clear that Flood Control Options #2 or #3 may also be chosen, and although less expensive, they achieve smaller flood control benefits.

Steve Mello asked if varying weir heights had been analyzed for Flood Control Options #2 and #3. Ms. Knittweis responded that for Flood Control Options #2 and #3, weir height variations had been analyzed down to 8 feet, but not 6 feet.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION UPDATE – Chris Elliott, Jones & Stokes and Gwen Knittweis, DWR

Mr. Elliott informed the group that a new element has been added to the project—Grizzly Slough. The Grizzly Slough project has been in the planning stages at DWR for a few years. It has common goals with the North Delta project, and is located within the North Delta project area. The inclusion of the Grizzly Slough project will be discussed at the next NDIG meeting.

Mr. Elliott then provided the group with a proposed schedule for EIR preparation:

Administrative Draft EIR – midsummer 2005
Public Draft EIR – late summer or early fall 2005

Brad Burkholder asked how the EIR will relate the project to all the other work occurring and planned to occur in the Delta. Mr. Elliott answered that other reasonably foreseeable projects in the area will be considered in the Cumulative Impacts analysis, as well as in the cumulative impacts analyses for each resource area.

6. NEXT MEETING

The next NDIG meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, July 13, from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at Jones & Stokes. The previously scheduled June NDIG meeting will be cancelled in order to hold the HMCT meeting, from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at Jones & Stokes. The project team is still considering holding at joint NDIG/Mokelumne-Cosumnes Watershed Alliance (MCWA) meeting in the future.