

WATERFOWL HUNTING & MANAGED WETLANDS METRICS AD HOC GROUP

April 28, 2023, 11:00 – 12:30 PM

Zoom Virtual Meeting

Meeting Objectives

- Orientation on Floodplains Reimagined Program.
- Establish a Recommendation to the Floodplains Reimagined Advisory Committee meeting for metrics for assessing the scenarios for floodplain inundation for their benefits, risks, and impacts to waterfowl hunting, managed wetlands, and rice fields.

Action Items

- Ben King to email Holly Dawley regarding a new technical assistance project.
- Chris Campbell to share multiple notch model results with participants.
- Chris Campbell to follow up with Craig Isola regarding rationale for differentiation in the categories of managed wetlands in the model.

Future Considerations

- Chris Campbell, cbec – Consider suggestion from Craig Isola, USFWS, about possibility for the model to include weighting for land properties according to the benefits delivered to different species.
- Jake Messerli, California Waterfowl Association - Suggested the modeling team check with Mike Casazza from USGS regarding marked waterfowl and data USGS has on bird location and habitat use.

Welcome and Introductions

Karis Johnston (Johnston), K&W Facilitator, welcomed all attendees, reviewed the meeting agenda, and objectives:

- Orientation on Floodplains Reimagined Program
- Establish a recommendation to the Floodplains Reimagined Advisory Committee meeting for metrics for assessing the scenarios for floodplain inundation for their benefits, risks, and impacts to waterfowl hunting, managed wetlands, and rice fields.

Orientation to Floodplains Reimagined

Lewis Bair (Bair), RD108 – Introduced attendees to the Floodplains Reimagined Program, reviewed the origins of the program and discussed the objectives that the program hopes to achieve.

Comments and Questions

- Inquired about the proper point of contact for technical assistance for new projects. Ben owns property north of RD108 which is currently wetlands but would like to convert 250 acres into permanent wetlands. It would be great to bring the project into the larger context of this group and its members. [Ben King (King), Colusa Co. Resource Conservation District / Landowner]
 - Responded that Holly Dawley, KSN would be the proper person to contact regarding new projects. (hdawley@ksninc.com) [Bair, RD108]

Metrics for Managed Wetlands and Waterfowl Hunting

Chris Campbell (Campbell), cbec and Virginia Getz (Getz), Ducks Unlimited (DU) presented on the Metrics for Managed Wetlands and Waterfowl Hunting including field management conditions, overview of bird habitat suitability criteria, and options for tools and metrics. After DU's presentation, participants provided the following comments and questions:

Comments and Questions

Field Management Conditions

- Questioned the rationale for the distinction between the two wildlife easements (USFWS or Wetland Reserve Program) on which duck clubs are located. [Craig Isola (Isola), USFWS]
 - Noted that he will need to convene with his team to identify why that is. [Campbell, cbec]
- Inquired if Floodplains Reimagined will consider the restoration of native pollinator habitat being a part of wetland development. This could include species such as bumble bees and monarchs in addition to hedgerows and milkweed plantings. [King, Colusa Co. Resource Conservation District / Landowner]
 - Clarified there are multiple uses for lands within the program, so the aforementioned habitat types are not a specific focus. However, in the future it would be valuable to consider the restoration of land for these species. [Campbell, cbec]
 - Noted that taking smaller actions like planting milkweeds and adding hedgerows is great to do on a small scale, but the Floodplains Reimagined program is more concerned with landscape scale restoration efforts. [Bair, RD108]
 - Added most actions under evaluation occur during the winter and interventions such as adding milkweed and hedgerows occur during warmer months outside of any operational window for the program. [Campbell, cbec]

- Commented that Highway 20 may be a poor choice to measure flows since the Davis Weir backs water up several miles into the channel of the Colusa Basin Drain. [King, Colusa Co. Resource Conservation District / Landowner (From Chat)]

Overview of Bird Habitat Suitability Criteria

- Clarified from a bioenergetics perspective, the land classes of managed seasonal wetlands, rice, and grain corn are the three habitats that will be considered suitable to waterfowl and will have a foraging value for birds. [Getz, DU]
- Noted many duck club owners in Yolo Bypass have noted waterfowl hunting continues through February. [Isola, USFWS]
 - Noted the core waterfowl season is represented in the metrics, and the junior hunt, veteran hunt, and late goose season are not being represented. [Getz, DU]
 - The Tech Team is taking into account the work being done in the Yolo Bypass to measure benefits and impacts on waterfowl hunting and managed wetlands. [Campbell, cbec]

Options for Tools and Metrics

- Inquired if anyone is considering the biodynamic impact of seasonal wetland inundation and flooding for the aquatic food web. For example, the seasonal wetlands on the west side of the Colusa Basin Drain are seasonally flooded and add to the aqua food web downstream? [King, Colusa Co. Resource Conservation District / Landowner]
 - Clarified that work is being done to characterize the productivity of the landscape. For example, how is new water being introduced to the landscape and how is that water being used for productivity and interactions with wetland habitats. [Campbell, cbec]
- Proposed two questions to the group to consider. 1) Should junior, veteran, and late goose hunt be added to the modeling scenarios and what weighting factor would they get? 2) How are changes in bird distribution being tracked when the flooded footprint is large? [Getz, DU]
 - Group members did not respond at this time to Getz's questions.
- Asked if all properties are treated the same? Would Sutter Refuge Sanctuary be treated the same as the Butte Sink Wildlife Management Area (the Bean Field)? [Isola, USFWS]
 - Replied the model does not capture much specificity between the weight of one property over another given the benefits delivered to the bird population. [Campbell, cbec]
 - Added the model could demonstrate inundation impacts on the sanctuary. [Getz, DU]
 - Suggested the modeling team check with Mike Casazza from USGS regarding marked waterfowl and data USGS has on bird location and habitat use. Soon it will be possible to incorporate it for bird use modeling. [Jake Messerli, California Waterfowl Association (From Chat)]

- Suggested considering two notches rather than just the Moulton Weir notch. The water levels in the Butte Sink could get too deep. Especially in a wet year if the notch is on the larger end. [King, Colusa Co. Resource Conservation District / Landowner (From Chat)]

Getz, DU, thanked participants for their time and asked that anyone contact her or Campbell with any thoughts on additional metrics, or questions and concerns about proposed metrics.

Adjourn

Johnston, K&W Facilitator, thanked all attendees, reviewed action items, and adjourned the meeting.

Participants

Ad hoc Group	
Affiliation	Attendees
Butte Sink Waterfowl Association	Craig Houck
California Waterfowl Association	Jake Messerli
Colusa County Resource Conservation District	Ben King
Ducks Unlimited	Brian Heidman
Department of Water Resources (DWR)	Eric McGrath
Foraker Properties	Erik Foraker
Larrabee Farms	Eric Larrabee
Lundberg Family Farms	Brita Lundberg Bryce Lundberg
Sacramento Outing Farms	Christopher Taylor
United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)	Craig Isola Jacob Byers
Wild Goose Club	JP Stover Roger Swanson
Unknown	Unknown

Program Team	
Affiliation	Team Member
Aquatic Resource Consulting Scientists	Keith Marine

cbec	Chris Campbell Jenna Duffin John Stofleth
Cramer Fish Sciences	Steve Zeug
Ducks Unlimited	Virginia Getz
Kearns & West (K&W)	Karis Johnston Eric Holmes
Kjeldsen Sinnock & Neudeck (KSN)	Barry O'Regan Holly Dawley
Larson Wurzel & Associates (LWA)	Mark Cowan
Reclamation District (RD) 108	Lewis Bair
San Francisco Estuary Institute (SFEI)	Kelly Iknayan