

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

June 23, 2023, 9-11am  
Zoom Virtual Meeting

### Meeting Objectives

- Shared understanding of Floodplains Reimagined Program status and Technical Assistance
- Recommendations for evaluation criteria

### Action Items

#### *Program Team*

- Kearns & West - Update the Priorities, Objectives, and Metrics Matrix along with the Evaluation Criteria in preparation for the June 28, 2023, Steering Committee meeting.

#### *Participants*

- Andy Atkinson, Bird Haven Ranch - Share the short white paper on the invertebrates and wetlands seven-year study with members of the Program Team.

### Advisory Committee Recommendations

After contributing to real-time revisions of the evaluation criteria, the Advisory Committee recommended the criteria to the Steering Committee.

### Welcome and Introductions

Julie Leimbach (Leimbach), Kearns & West, welcomed all attendees. All attendees are listed in the table at the end of the document.

Leimbach reviewed the meeting agenda and objectives.

### Program Timeline and Status

Holly Dawley (Dawley), KSN, presented the Floodplains Reimagined program status and current timeline. Key updates included:

#### *Program Status*

- Program Team members met with several stakeholders and landowners in the previous six weeks.

- Conducting site visits to the managed and agricultural wetlands allowed the Program Team a better understanding of the land and operations which will help inform potential project and Technical Assistance options for landowners.

#### *Program Timeline*

- Dawley reminded meeting participants that Floodplains Reimagined is a long-term program, currently still in Phase 1.
- Federal and state funding continues to be allotted for the program.
- The Program Team continues to develop the evaluation criteria and work towards defining success for program participants.

## Key Questions for the Meeting

Leimbach outlined key questions and specified what was needed from the Advisory Committee upon the meeting's conclusion. Leimbach requested:

1. Input on the updated program objectives
2. Input on the evaluation criteria for agriculture and recreation priorities
3. A recommendation from the Advisory Committee to the Steering Committee for approval and incorporation of the updated objectives and evaluation criteria.

Input requests would be for the following priorities identified early in the program by Floodplains Reimagined members:

- Agriculture
- Recreation
- Floodplain Wildlife – Salmon
- Butte Sink areas

Leimbach reminded participants that additional priorities previously identified include:

- Floodplain connectivity
- Ecosystem health
- Water supply
- Flood control
- Indigenous cultural values
- Economic prosperity

## Evaluation Criteria

Leimbach and Chris Campbell (Campbell), cbec, presented the existing evaluation criteria for the program priorities of Recreation, Agriculture, Floodplain Wildlife, and Considerations and Constraints in the Butte Sink area. Leimbach solicited input from participants who made the following suggestions and edits to the criteria. Underlined items indicate new additions.

*Priority: Recreation*

## Objective

- Maintain or improve recreational hunting opportunities and conditions

## Evaluation Criteria

- Maintain the number of hunting opportunity days and timing
  - Maintain shoot level depths
  - Maintain access
- Maintain or improve waterfowl density and species type diversity by managing habitat conditions
- Minimize need for maintenance on infrastructure and field management
  - Managed wetlands – levees and water control
  - Irrigation – water delivery systems
  - Recreational hunting – incorporate docks and cabins built on stilts, incorporate duck blinds, emphasize safety
- Maintain or improve predictability of hunting opportunities
- Maintain or improve off-season and on-season vegetation management
- Maintain or improve safety related to depth, velocity, timing, and predictability

*Priority: Agriculture*

## Objectives

- Do no harm to existing property and water rights
- Limit actions to voluntary measures
- Maintain planting, growing, and harvest seasons
- Maintain or improve agricultural water supply

## Evaluation Criteria

- Maintain seasonal start and end points
- Maintain cropping flexibility
- Maintain or improve property access
- Minimize needs for maintenance on infrastructure and field management
  - Managed Wetlands – levees and water control
  - Irrigation – water delivery systems
- Maintain crop insurance coverage eligibility
- Improve financial incentive programs
- Maintain or improve water quality for crops
- Maintain or improve water supply for agriculture

*Priority: Considerations and Options – Butte*

## Agricultural

- Maintain existing depth, magnitude, and frequency of inundation on agricultural fields
  - Context: “Maintaining baseline” is the term commonly used by stakeholders

- Maintain or improve water systems to Above-Normal and Wet conditions, inflow = outflow over the season of precipitation
  - Context: Butte Creek flows can be relatively high and still allow functional benefits to Butte Sink managed wetlands

#### Recreation, Floodplain Wildlife, and Floodplain Connectivity Priority

- Maintain existing depth, magnitude, and frequency of inundation on hunting clubs and managed wetlands during hunting season and explore changes to inundation on the shoulder season of the hunting season.

#### All Priorities

- Consider the need for options that enjoy support from all hydrologically connected Butte landowners.
  - Context: Consider hydrologic connectivity of flow across lands, collection of water in Lower Butte Sink, and drainage into Butte Creek.

#### *Priority: Floodplain Wildlife - Salmon*

##### Objectives

- Increase the frequency, duration and spatial extent of the inundation within the Floodplains Reimagined geographic areas to stimulate production of invertebrates to provide high quality habitats for rearing when juvenile salmon are migrating through the area
- Improve juvenile access to functional habitat, survival and growth outcomes for juvenile Chinook salmon
- Reduce impediments to adult fish passage

##### Evaluation Criteria

- Food web and export criteria
  - Context: Includes food availability and distribution but not juvenile access to food
- Habitat Suitability Criteria for juvenile salmonid on the floodplain
  - Context: Including depth, velocity, presence
- Decrease passage impediments

#### *Priority: Floodplain Wildlife – Birds*

The following Objective was updated during the meeting for Birds:

- Improve habitat conditions for waterbirds, shorebirds, and waterfowl using the floodplain

#### *Questions and Comments on Objectives and Evaluation Criteria*

Participants provided the following questions and comments.

- Multiple concerns about a holistic approach to the hydrology; properties cannot be isolated.
  - There is no intention of creating a one-size-fits-all scenario. The Program Team is trying to ensure that we have customized and localized data and input to develop customized solutions. [Program Team]
- How do we ensure we're not bringing water levels above baseline conditions?

- “Inflow = outflow” is more of an oversimplification that we need to be cognizant of how much water is coming in and how much is draining over the whole season. More nuanced wording is needed; both proper timing and capacity are required for managing the water level. [Program Team]
- A majority of lower Butte Creek flow goes through the hunting clubs’ water system. The clubs gradually built the system to control water, i.e., spillways, to be able to pass large volumes of water. I think that’s what we’re attempting to accomplish when we say “inflow = outflow”. Regarding operational gates and notches, there may be engineering solutions to allow water in and out to allow for both salmon and migratory birds. [Craig Isola, USFWS]
- Suggestion to expand the three metrics listed under Floodplain Wildlife and relate those objectives to food webs and export criteria? [Brian Ellrott, NMFS]
  - Suggestion for further discussion between Ellrott and Bjarni Serup (Serup), CDFW, on this topic. [Program Team]
- Bird Haven Ranch is involved with a seven-year study on wetland design and management that decreases mosquito production while enhancing invertebrate production and diverse moist-soil plant production. Interim results have found that when you put water on dry landscape, the mosquitos will flourish. They are currently in year two of the study and will have final results to share in 3-4 years. He will provide a short paper on the topic. [Andy Atkinson, Bird Haven Ranch]
- Support expressed by Advisory Committee members on the importance of tying together the Objectives and Actions that preserve the values represented by the Program Priorities. [Virginia Getz, Ducks Unlimited]

#### *Questions & Comments on Process*

- Request for clarification on the difference between Metrics and Evaluation Criteria. [Matt Brown, USFWS]
  - The Metrics are units or numbers used to measure, as in, ‘by what unit are we measuring success?’ During conversations about methods to measure success, we realized we were not defining the *criteria* for success. We’ve been using the hydrodynamic model to look at field depths for the purpose of improved conditions. We needed to define success in a better way. [Program Team]

## Update on Technical Assistance

There was not sufficient time remaining to fully discuss updates on the Technical Assistance program. Dawley encouraged anyone interested to reach out to the Program Team. She also informed the Committee there will be a report at a future Advisory Committee meeting on existing Technical Assistance proposals. Additional information can be found on the [Landowner Support](#) page of the program website.

## Closing Remarks and Adjourn

Leimbach reviewed the action items, thanked participants for their participation, and adjourned the meeting.

## Participants

<b>Steering Committee Members</b>	
<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Name(s)</b>
<b>California Department of Fish &amp; Wildlife (CDFW)</b>	Bjarni Serup
<b>Ducks Unlimited</b>	Virginia Getz
<b>National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)</b>	Brian Ellrott Ellen McBride

<b>Advisory Committee Members</b>	
<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Name(s)</b>
<b>Bird Haven Ranch</b>	Andy Atkinson
<b>California Rice Commission</b>	Paul Buttner
<b>CDFW</b>	Kelsey Navarre
<b>Department of Water Resources (DWR)</b>	David Pesavento Jesus Esparza
<b>Ducks Unlimited</b>	Dan Fehringer
<b>FlowWest</b>	Bethany Hackenjos
<b>Foraker Properties</b>	Andrew Foraker Erik Foraker
<b>Montna Farms</b>	Jon Munger
<b>Northern California Water Association (NCWA)</b>	Todd Manley
<b>Rancho Llano Seco</b>	Charles Thieriot
<b>Reclamation District 1004</b>	Hans Herkert
<b>River Partners</b>	Torey Byington
<b>U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)</b>	Craig Isola Curt McCasland Elissa Buttermore Matt Brown Tricia Bratcher
<b>Wild Goose Club</b>	Roger Swanson

<b>Program Team</b>	
<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Name(s)</b>
<b>cbec</b>	Chris Campbell Scott Wright
<b>Cramer Fish Sciences</b>	Steve Zeug
<b>Kearns &amp; West (K&amp;W)</b>	Julie Leimbach Bethany Taylor
<b>Kjeldsen Sinnock Neudeck (KSN)</b>	Holly Dawley
<b>Point Blue</b>	Kristy Dybala