

## Floodplains Reimagined Landowner Leadership Ad hoc Group Meeting

June 28, 2022, 9 am – 10:30 am

Hybrid Meeting, Zoom platform and RD 108 Offices (Grimes, CA)

### Meeting Objectives:

- To provide guidance on the approach for landowner engagement
- To provide guidance on the draft Technical Assistance Call for Proposals

### Action Items

1. Jon Munger, Montna Farms, and Jim Wallace, Wallace Bros. Farms / Colusa Drain Mutual Water Co. – Discuss proposal development.
2. Landowner attendees – Provide names and email addresses of additional landowner contacts.

### Welcome and Introductions

Julie Leimbach (Leimbach), Kearns & West, Karis Johnston (Johnston), Kearns & West, and Lewis Bair, RD 108, welcomed all attendees and facilitated introductions of virtual and in-person attendees. They reviewed the meeting agenda and objectives.

### Overview and Interconnected Activities

#### Overview

Bair provided an overview of Floodplains Reimagined Program objectives and process principles.

#### Objectives:

- Support salmon recovery
- Improve wetlands
- Improve groundwater recharge

#### Process Principles:

- Remain entirely voluntary for landowners
- Be structured around the needs and input of landowners

#### Interconnected Activities

The Floodplains Reimagined Program seeks to provide a locally led voluntary effort to develop subregional packages of floodplain projects. There is an opportunity for these projects to support three key related efforts in the region: 1) Voluntary Agreements, 2) Sustainable Groundwater Management, and 3) Flood Management System. to submit the Voluntary Agreements to satisfy the floodplain element. These packages of landowner proposed projects could also provide benefits to groundwater recharge and the Sustainable Groundwater Management objectives in the region.

Bair outlined the Voluntary Agreements and the floodplain element.

- Designed as a healthy river program as part of the Water Quality Control Plan run by the State Water Resources Control Board
- Floodplain element – additional inundated acres to support juvenile salmon rearing

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- Voluntary Agreement Timeline: Once the State adopts the agreement, it will likely be a 10-year commitment with additional years as a possibility
  - Longest possible term is 15 years

## Questions & Answers

Group members discussed the following clarifications about the Voluntary Agreements:

- Affected Parties
  - Does the Voluntary Agreement affect the riparian usage permits on the river, or is it broader than that?
    - It's broader – it will affect every user along the Sacramento Valley. Those who are not part of the Memorandum of Understanding of the Voluntary Agreement will be part of a group vying for water rights, i.e., involuntary flow group under the State Water Resources Control Board.
- Eligibility
  - What level of land ownership is required to be part of the Voluntary Agreement?
    - Requires agreement to be a contributor of resources.
    - Requires some level of compensation from water users.
    - One payment component is upfront where the State has agreed to pay for water. For the second component, water users are contributing to a collection of funds to make annual payments. Those are \$300/acre foot.
  - Location
    - If my farms are along both the Bypass and the Refuge and my interests extend beyond that, what does that mean for applying?
      - You may be in more than one basin.
- Agreement Components
  - To acknowledge the hardship of Critical and Wet years, no water action is taken. Requirement of 281,000-acre fee for the Voluntary Agreement in an Above-Normal year
  - Floodplain work is the most important part of the Voluntary Agreement process. Landowners can market fish benefits or groundwater recharge and decide for themselves if they want to advance the effort.
  - Funding and technical team support are available, but landowners will need to organize among themselves.
- Timeline
  - The timeline for joining is likely 6-9 months.
- Sponsors of Project Packages to the Voluntary Agreements
  - The project sponsors could be subgroups within sub-basins. Groups would ideally share hydrology and water movement on a landscape.
  - Individuals could make proposals but will not likely get much traction.
- Colusa Landowners Participation in the Voluntary Agreements
  - The Colusa Drain has no specific water allocation, but a long history with significant amounts of rice acres. How might the landowners along the Colusa Drain participate each year if there is no water in the Drain to convert? With climate change, there are an increasing number of years in which there is no water in the Drain to convert.
  - RD 108 is a water rights owner, but as a contractor, RD108 doesn't have the same opportunities as landowners along the Colusa Drain.

- Landowners along the Colusa Drain probably have less access to water despite having water rights.
- It's not the most favorable approach to providing water, and hard to do if we don't have full participation. But it is possible.

## Technical Assistance and Modeling

### Flood Control System

A fundamental issue of the current flood control system is that it has created 'feast or famine' conditions for winter floodplain activation. The Landowner Technical Assistance Program intends to alleviate those extremes with the following conditions:

- Low-flow floodplain activation
- November-to-March inundation schedule to avoid the harvest and growing seasons
- Respect of existing land uses
- Voluntary participation, landowner-driven

### Potential Types of Actions

- River Connections
  - Increase the frequency and duration at manageable flows
  - Examples: Knights Landing Outfall Gates (KLOG), Tisdale, various weirs
- Floodplain Infrastructure
  - Originally developed for agriculture and drainage
  - Allow for fish passage
  - Water management
- Land Management
  - Spreading and holding water
  - Fish-friendly passage
  - Fish screens

### Technical Assistance Program

#### *Funding*

Funding for the Program is provided by both a state grant and federal funding.

#### *Technical Support through Modeling*

The Technical Team is available to model scenarios to help landowners determine what actions to include in their Technical Assistance proposals. Modeling examples include:

- Low-flow modeling to show how water flows across the landscape and included properties
- Quantification of benefits such as an increase in groundwater infiltration
- Support for identifying and comparing benefits of scenarios

## Questions and Comments

Group members discussed the following clarifications:

### Decision-making and Accountability

- Decision-making and Funding Entities
  - The State is the ultimate purchaser of these floodplain benefits under the Voluntary Agreements. Landowners will essentially be marketing the floodplain benefits to the State.
  - A Floodplains Reimagined Steering Committee with a broad representation of groups serves as the decision-making body that approves proposals from technical assistance under Floodplains Reimagined.
- Aspirational Projects
  - Landowners could consider the following elements:
    - History and existing conditions of region
    - Funding entity who will buy the benefit from the landowner
    - Colusa Basin's habitat and the potential funding entity's unfamiliarity with the basin.

### Modeling

- Status of modeling process.
  - Chris Campbell, cbec, is modeling existing conditions and looking at actual water flows. Baseline modeling involves connections on the lower end.
- Expectation of fish habitat in specific areas, such as the Colusa Drain near Knights Landing.
  - Scenarios could include:
    - Create juvenile rearing habitat and river connections in the Colusa Drain area. Currently, the Colusa Drain area does not have salmon.
    - Produce fish food on the floodplains and then release it into the mainstem Sacramento.

## Landowner Subregional Meeting Planning

The group did not discuss the topics of the subregional meetings.

### Subregional Schedule

- Butte Subregional Landowner Meeting: July 19, 2022 at RD 108
- Colusa Subregional Landowner Meeting: July 19, 2022 at RD 108
- Sutter Bypass Subregional Landowner Meeting: tentative for August 2022

## Adjourn

Leimbach, Johnston, and Bair thanked attendees for their attendance and participation and adjourned the meeting.

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## Meeting Attendees

The following people were in attendance:

### Participants

Name	Affiliation
Denise Carter	Colusa County supervisor
Doug McGeoghegan	McGeoghegan Real Estate
Hans Herkert	RD 1004
Jennifer (Wallace) Sanders	Wallace Brothers Farms; Colusa & Sutter Cos. Resource Conservation Districts
Jim Wallace	Colusa Drain Mutual Water
Jon Munger	Montna Farms
Lynelle Pollock	Colusa Drain Mutual Water, Colusa Drain District
Roger Cornwell	RD 1500, Sutter Mutual Water
Roger Swanson	Wild Goose Club
Ted Trimble	Western Canal Water District

### Program and Technical Team

Name	Affiliation
Barry O'Regan	KSN
Bethany Taylor	Kearns & West
Chris Campbell	cbec
Eric Nagy	LWA
Julie Leimbach	Kearns & West
Karis Johnston	Kearns & West
Lewis Bair	RD 108