

## Colusa Landowner Meeting

July 19, 2022, 1 pm – 3 pm

RD 108 office, 975 Wild Bend Rd, Grimes, CA 95950

### Meeting Objectives:

- Provide an overview of Floodplains Reimagined
- Provide an overview of the landowner engagement process
- Determine interests and concerns landowners may have regarding implementation
- Discuss which activities and incentives are viable in the region
- Determine next steps

### Action Items

1. Program Team – Connect with Emily Reinhart, Roosevelt Ranch, about pursuing a permit for groundwater recharge.
2. Program Team – Develop a scheduling matrix for the flooding of rice fields and factor in environmental concerns.

### Welcome and Introductions

Lewis Bair (Bair), RD 108, and Karis Johnston (Johnston), Kearns & West, welcomed all attendees and facilitated introductions for Program Team members and Colusa landowner participants.

### Overview and Interconnected Activities

Bair gave an overview of the Floodplains Reimagined Program.

- Floodplains Reimagined is a healthy river program to restore rivers in the valley by reconnecting rivers to floodplains.
- The Floodplains Reimagined Program Team adapted the approach taken in the Yolo Bypass with the program's subregions and landowner properties in mind.
- Floodplains Reimagined encourages landowners to participate and work together to construct proposals to add value to their properties. The program is committed to respecting existing land uses and landowner interests.
- Floodplains Reimagined proposes to incentivize landowners to voluntarily inundate lands in the winter at shallow levels to increase river and floodplain connectivity and support multiple objectives including habitat for salmon and birds. The proposed timing and flow parameters are as follows:
  - The proposed water flows will be relatively low and are intended to stretch across the landscape rather than introducing heavy water flows.
    - Flows: With the current flood infrastructure, the Sacramento River needs to reach 80 percent capacity in order for water to flow through the 10 – 12-ft weirs and spread out on the floodplains.
    - Timing: November to March, although October and April are also possible depending on the project and property in question.
- Actions: Improvements to floodplain connectivity could be made via the following actions:
  - River connections that include:
    - Notching of weirs
    - Modification of outfall gates

- Modification or addition of diversions
  - Floodplain infrastructure that controls or alters the movement of water
- Benefits: Benefits resulting from the proposed actions include:
  - Improved fish migration
  - Improved juvenile salmon rearing
  - Improved bird populations
  - Improved groundwater recharge
  - Protected water rights and properties
- Geographic Scope: The planning footprint is the upper end of the Butte Basin, almost to Hamilton City, and down to the Yolo Bypass. It includes both sides of the mainstem Sacramento River.

## Regional Project Ideas

The participants suggested the following project ideas:

- Incentives
  - Funding water inundation [Emily Reinhart]
- River Connections
  - Notching Colusa Weir [Woody Yerxa]
- Field-Level Activities
  - Mulching the rice into the plain [John Brennan]
- Regulatory and Legal
  - Permitting groundwater recharge [John Brennan]
  - Exploring additional access to joint water rights [John Brennan]

Members of the Program Team also suggested this additional project idea:

- Fish Movement
  - Installing fish pumps [Program/Technical Team]

## Technical Assistance

Bair and Barry O'Regan (O'Regan), KSN, provided information about the technical assistance process and proposal submittal.

- Chris Campbell (Campbell), cbec, and his team are working on modeling and are available to run scenarios for landowner properties to allow landowners to view changes to the landscape as a result of potential actions.
  - Modeling can demonstrate how water will move across the landscape
  - The Technical Team can incorporate feedback from landowners if the modeling does or does not track with what they typically see on their properties.
- The Steering Committee has developed goals and objectives to guide decision making and approve technical assistance proposals.
- The Technical Assistance Memo outlines how to provide proposal information in a consistent manner for Steering Committee review.
- The ideal proposal involves a group of landowners working together and agreeing on desired outcomes.
  - If landowners are planning on a project that will affect their neighbors, bring those neighbors on board or communicate to the Program Team who can support outreach.

- If landowners are hesitant to approach their neighbors, such as with duck club competitors, the Program Team is available to help with the approach and arrange for meetings and strategic communication with them.

Group members provided questions and comments:

- **Proposal Process**

- John Brennan (Brennan), Goose Club – Clarification – Is the proposal period now through March? How will it roll out?
  - Program Team response – Our decision-making structure is made up of a Steering Committee and an Advisory Committee. We're working through the process details now. If a proposal fits within the program structure, we can get moving quickly with the planning process.
- Chris Ochoa (Ochoa), Affiliation – Clarification – Who is on the Steering Committee?
  - Program Team response – Approximately 10 people including Ward Charter and Denise Carter; Andy Duffey is on the east side; Virginia Getz of Ducks Unlimited; Julie Rentner of River Partners. State and Federal agencies are represented. We have a broad representation. The Steering Committee is the decision-making group, and the Advisory Committee provides input from people within the program footprint.

- **Project Planning**

- Brennan, Goose Club – Clarification – Much of what we're already doing is state-funded. Is there any funding specifically allocated for [Floodplains Reimagined] projects?
  - Program Team response – There's an associated program called Floodplain Forward which is advocacy for this floodplain work. They received \$5M and are on track to get \$10M this year. There is no committed funding right now, but the voluntary agreements are on their way to producing thousands of additional acres for floodplain habitat and fish food.
  - Program Team response – A full package of [Technical Assistance] actions could be funded by up to three different committees, plus it's possible to get private funding to complement that. We can help package that up.
- Brennan, Goose Club – Clarification – Will funding pay for water? For example, if a farmer wanted to participate in the Food-for-Fish program.
  - Program Team response – Funding would probably indirectly cover water. Currently, it would probably be an annual payment, but there is no funding source for water right now. I think Floodplains Forward dedicates some money to Food-for-Fish which would pay for water.
- Woody Yerxa (Yerxa), Colusa Shooting Club / River Vista Farms – Clarification – Where is the water coming from?
  - Program Team response – Water or changes in flow could come from Tisdale Wier.
    - Yerxa – Will you also notch the Colusa Weir?
      - Program Team response – A landowner group could express willingness to have the Colusa weir notched and be paid for those activities. Reoperating those facilities could also provide groundwater benefits. There are multiple ways to reimburse landowners. A new river connection that moves

juveniles from one area or river to another is an idea. New structures are a possibility.

- Emily Reinhart (Reinhart), Goose Club / Roosevelt Ranch – Comment – For the slough groundwater recharge project, we're working with DWR and The Nature Conservancy to get agreements in place, identify whose water it is, and how to get access. We don't have funding yet but are looking at what we need for it and what steps are required. We are starting with a temporary permit and modeling what Yolo County did.
  - Program Team – Comment – Permit obtainment is a long process.
  - Denise Carter (Carter), Colusa Co. Board of Directors / Colusa Groundwater Authority – Bill Vanderwaal (Vanderwaal), RD 108, is working on a similar recharge effort.
- **Winter Water Rights**
  - Brennan, Goose Club – Comment – A lack of winter water rights is frequently being discussed in the region. We manage approximately six properties and flood them every year and we still don't have water rights. Maybe we start with that and marry that effort to a groundwater recharge effort.
    - Program Team – Clarification – The winter water rights that exist are around general decommissioning?
      - Brennan – Clarification - Could that be part of this process?
  - Vincent Andreotti (Andreotti), Robert's Ditch Irrigation Co. – Clarification – If you have winter water rights, can you move water off your ranch to someone else's, or do you get penalized?
    - Vanderwaal, RD 108 – Response – If you transfer [water], you show forbearance.
      - Andreotti – Is it just tailwater at that point?
        - Program Team response – The question is: did you beneficially use [the water].
- **Mallard Habitat**
  - Jacob Byers (Byers), USFWS – Comment – Northeast California is probably the source for mallards. Some are year-round residents, and some are migratory.
  - Yerxa, Colusa Shooting Club / River Vista Farms – There's a tremendous downturn in mallard populations compared to what we used to see.
    - Byers – Observation – When rice prices were down, those were high-nesting [areas]. Taking into consideration invertebrate numbers, chemical use, and predation in the 70 percent population reduction statistics.
    - Program Team response – We learned from the Butte Subregion that mallard habitat is very important and a cause that might bring in additional participation.

## Future Meeting Logistics

### Location

- Participants generally appreciate having the option of virtual or in-person meetings.
- Preference of the RD 108 office location was mixed.
- Location convenience will encourage participation.

## Frequency

- The Sutter Bypass has somewhat of a head start and may be able to get going quickly on projects.
- The Colusa Basin has potential to start projects soon.
- Participants may not want to wait until October for the baseline modeling results to start putting together proposals.

## Next Steps

The Program Team suggested meeting again in approximately two months, giving participants the opportunity to share these ideas and information with their contacts and neighbors. The Program Team is available to answer questions and start project discussions by phone and email.

Group members provided questions and comments:

- **Information Sharing**
  - Brennan, Goose Club – Clarification – Can we share the Floodplains Reimagined Landowner Brief and Technical Assistance Memo with others? This information would be helpful.
    - Program Team response – Yes, please share the materials with others in the region.

## Adjourn

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

## Meeting Attendees

The following people were in attendance:

### Participants

Name	Affiliation
Chris Ochoa	Colusa Drain Land Manager
Dave Schaad	Dunnigan Water District
Denise Carter	Colusa County Board of Directors / Colusa Groundwater Authority / Mid-Upper Sacramento Regional Flood Management Plan
Emily Reinhart	Goose Club / Roosevelt Ranch
Gabrielle Stadem	Lundberg Family Farms
Greg Krzys	Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District
Jacob Byers	USFWS
John Brennan	Goose Club
Vincent Andreotti	Robert's Ditch Irrigation Company
William (Bill) Vanderwaal	RD 108
Woody Yerxa	Colusa Shooting Club, Inc., River Vista Farms

**Program and Technical Team**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Barry O'Regan	KSN
Bethany Taylor	Kearns & West
Chris Campbell	cbec
Eric Nagy	LWA
Karis Johnston	Kearns & West
Lewis Bair	RD 108
Mark Cowan	LWA