

Floodplains Reimagined Advisory Committee Kickoff

December 8, 2021, 9 am – 11 am PST

Virtual Meeting, Zoom platform

The Floodplains Reimagined Program is comprised of a diverse group of stakeholders who have volunteered to assist with leading efforts to collaboratively develop a feasibility study focusing on the reactivation of floodplains on the East and West sides of the Sacramento River in the Sutter, Butte, and Colusa basins.

The objectives for the kickoff meeting were:

- To orient stakeholders to the Floodplain Reimagined Program and
- To provide guidance on the Draft Priorities/Objectives and the Draft Charter.

Action Items

- Kearns & West - Update the Draft Charter and Program Brief and list of Related Efforts based on input received.
- Kearns & West – Schedule recurring Advisory Committee meetings based on polling preferences.

Welcome and Introductions

Julie Leimbach (Leimbach), Senior Director and Facilitator at Kearns & West, welcomed all attendees by inviting everyone to provide introductions and affiliations. While comments in this meeting summary will not be attributed to individuals, Advisory Committee members in attendance are listed at the end of this document. In total, there were forty-five (45) participants.

The following program team staff members were also in attendance:

- Lewis Bair, Reclamation District 108, Floodplains Reimagined Program Team Lead
- Barry O'Regan, Kjeldsen, Sinnock & Neudeck, Inc. (KSN), Program Manager
- Eric Nagy, Larsen Wurzel & Associates, Inc. (LWA)
- Julie Leimbach, Kearns & West
- Sharon Hu, Kearns & West
- Kayla Kelly-Slatten, Kearns & West
- Bethany Taylor, Kearns & West
- Maria Bone, Kearns & West

Leimbach reviewed the meeting agenda and objectives. The Advisory Committee broke out into small groups to conduct introductions via an icebreaker. Bair then provided an overview of the program vision and the significance in convening a large, robust group of stakeholders.

Leimbach expanded upon Bair's introduction, clarifying the program's role as a "hub" of information among all the related efforts taking place throughout the Central Valley region.

Leimbach then introduced Brian Ellrott (Ellrott) from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), who presented on NMFS's salmon recovery interests as related to the Floodplains Reimagined program. He highlighted the need decline of salmon and the need for salmon recovery. Ellrott highlighted several projects intending to improve floodplain connectivity in the region.

Participant Roster and Draft Program Brief

Leimbach reviewed the Floodplains Reimagined Steering Committee and Advisory Committee roster. Additionally, Leimbach reviewed the Summary of Interview Findings, emphasizing the wide range of interests, issues, and input received thus far. The facilitation team incorporated the comments made in the interviews into the Program Brief priorities and objectives. The facilitation team divided the participants into breakout groups to provide feedback on the updated Vision, Priorities, and Objectives.

Breakout Group 1 (Main Room)

Facilitator - Sharon Hu (Hu) and Notetaker - Bethany Taylor

Breakout Group 1 members offered the following comments:

Priorities

- Use “crisper” language regarding the specificity of the program’s overarching Priorities, particularly surrounding what the program will do and will not do.
- Each priority should have subheadings with details to avoid vagueness.
- The “ranking” of Priorities and the importance of balancing them, not ranking them.
- One member suggested adding “water temperature” alongside the already listed water quality priority.

Objectives

- All Objectives should be quantifiable and criteria established for suitability that will work towards achieving the various benefits outlined by the Priorities.
- Another member asked about the time intervals associated with managing and gauging benefits, stating that money should not be spent if improvements are not seen.

Process Objectives

- One member suggested that the first objective should include language establishing how the program will collaborate with related efforts.
- Another member suggested to specifically call out flood risk reduction and actions to achieve the multiple benefits alongside flood risk reduction.
- One member also questioned how the program will resolve conflicts, if they should arise.

Breakout Group 2

Facilitator and Notetaker – Julie Leimbach (Leimbach)

Breakout Group 2 members offered the following comments:

Priorities and Objectives

- Multiple members suggested language specifically identifying salmon and birds as cultural resources with traditional value.
- Another praised the second objective but suggested that fish need to be called out separately as they are the primary for this project.
- Use holistic language and clarify terminology, such as “surrogate floodplain habitat”, to further explain functional connectivity of the floodplain.

- The program should seek to do no harm to other related efforts and species programs, such as the existing pollinator programs.
- The California Condor population, as a related effort, should be incorporated into this program.

Breakout Group 3

Facilitator – Kayla Kelly-Slatten (Kelly-Slatten), Notetaker – Maria Bone

Breakout Group 3 members offered the following comments:

Vision

- Participants asked some clarifying questions regarding the intent of the program.
- Participants then spoke to the need to ensure that related efforts are included throughout the program, particularly to avoid redundancy and bottleneck.
- Add language that refers to increasing resiliency in land and water resources.
- Water and fish should be called out separately.

Priority and Objectives

- Clarification between the Priorities and Objectives.
- Some aspect of the Priorities and Objectives should consider “scaling up” in regards to cost efficiency, specifically as it relates to incorporating in other related efforts and/or alternatives.

Process Objectives

- Process Objectives should highlight the cyclical style of collaboration and the need for continuing the conversation as the process progresses.

Phase I Feasibility Study

Barry O'Regan (O'Regan), KSN, presented on the formulation of the Feasibility Study. He discussed the creation of study development tools and demonstrated a data visualization tool that allows the viewer to see the impacts resulting from various actions in the floodplains region. Current data was compared to that of data collected in 1997 to emphasize the changes that have taken place in the region. By 2023, the meeting grant guidelines and implementation plan are expected to be in effect.

Advisory Committee members asked clarifying questions to which the Program Team members responded with the following key takeaways:

- Key time period for juvenile salmon rearing should be checked/updated in KSN's presentation of the Feasibility Study.
- Timing of technical team meetings
 - Leimbach – Technical Teams will meet throughout the program
- Incorporation of related efforts and previous efforts' tools into this program, and not reinventing the wheel. Suggestion to include Mid-Sac Regional Conservation Investment Strategy program.
 - Bair - Overarching hope for this program is for it to act as a framework for other pilots and corresponding activities. Avoid reinventing the wheel.
- Intended audience for modeling tools and results
 - Bair - all individuals working towards advancing this program.
- Program scope should be wider to include CA garter snake and vegetation. Suggested inclusion of other “low-hanging fruit” species, like snakes.
 - O'Regan – Landscape scale quantification tool is not species-specific but focused more on landscape approach.

- Support for set of tools as a whole but expressed concern that the tools may allow specific interest groups to only focus on their specific needs; thus, the process is important to evaluate the multiple benefits of different actions.
 - Suggestion to include an end-result consequence table with all alternative options and impacts on Program objectives.

Program Structure and Draft Charter

Leimbach reviewed the Draft Charter and its outline of a program structure and roles of the Steering Committee, Advisory Committee, and Technical Teams.

Breakout Group 1 (Main Room)

Facilitator - Sharon Hu (Hu) and Notetaker - Bethany Taylor

Breakout Group 1 members offered the following comments:

SC Roles

- The SC should review full roster of AC and tech teams, providing input on what stakeholders may be missing.
- Members raised concerns regarding the lack of landowners on the SC, stating that balance of interests and representation is necessary.
- A member did comment that the SC is suitable if stakeholders feel they are represented.

AC Roles

- Language needed to clarify the role of the AC, specifically that the AC is “not required to come to a consensus agreement to make recommendations.”
- Members raised the idea that decisions can be made so long as participants understand the various tradeoffs, noting that consensus should be a goal and that trust can be gained through early transparent practices.
- Another member suggested various levels of alignment instead of a consensus agreement.
- A concern regarding the lack of agricultural interests as a factor in exploring consensus.

Breakout Group 2

Facilitator and Notetaker – Julie Leimbach (Leimbach)

Breakout Group 2 members offered the following comments:

Structure

- Reference to the Central Valley Salmon Partnership Charter for general guideline structure.
- The team should consider mechanisms and documentation for how members can take ownership of this program, whether through logos, signatures, or other means.
 - However, as one member noted, agencies will need time for their legal departments to review if signatures are required.

Process

- Identify who is making decisions during the planning phase, who is responsible for coordinating actions on the landscape, and who is responsible for acquiring funding.

- Rice farmers who are unable to participate in this program still need to be involved to bring the resulting implementation strategy to fruition. The Charter process should support this idea of inclusivity.

Breakout Group 3

Facilitator – Kayla Kelly-Slatten (Kelly-Slatten), Notetaker – Maria Bone

Breakout Group 3 members offered the following comments:

Structure

- Concern towards the seemingly imbalanced SC - seems to be weighted against water districts and landowners.
- There was commentary regarding the initial engagement process, interviews, and outreach conversations.
- One participant noted that multiple SC members wear multiple hats, acting on behalf of different groups of constituents.

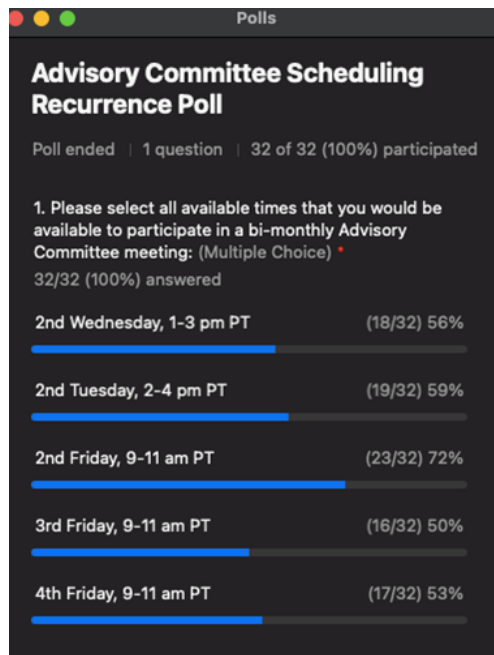
Process

- Concern about how majority-minority decisions could lack balance of interests.
- One member suggested that tiered options and/or alternative pathways may allow consideration during implementation stages.
- Additionally, participants associated with each option/alternative pathway should be tracked to support transparency and resourcefulness.
- Another member commented that if the ultimate product of this program is feasibility, the SC may not be the best group to highlight all the alternatives.

[Clarification: There will be no majority-minority recommendations. The Charter outlines a process by which the facilitation team will document areas of convergence and divergence.]

Scheduling of Future/Recurring Meetings

During a break, the facilitation team polled the group on preferences for Advisory Committee meeting schedule. The meetings will be held bi-monthly (every other month). The results are depicted by the screenshot below.



Reminders and Adjournment

The facilitation team reminded the Advisory Committee members to provide their feedback on the Draft Charter and Program Brief by the December 15th to be incorporated into meeting materials for the next Steering Committee meeting.

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

Advisory Committee Attendees

Amy Merrill, American Rivers
Ann Hayden, EDF
Anna Schiller, EDF
Bjarni Serup, CDFW
Brian Ellrott, NMFS
Carson Jeffres, UC Davis
Corey Shake, NRCS / Point Blue Conservation
Craig Isola, USFWS, Sacramento NWRC
Curt McCasland, Sacramento NWRC
Dan Fehring - Ducks Unlimited, Inc.
Denise Carter, Colusa Co.
Felix Yeung, USACE
Hans Herkert, RD 1004, Grow West
Jacob Katz, CalTrout
Jane Dolan, CVFPB
Jennifer Wallace Sanders, RCD
Jessica Lopez, Konkow Valley Tribe
Jesus Esparza, DWR
Jim Wallace, Wallace Bros. Farms
Jon Munger, Sutter Bypass Assoc. / Landowner
Julie Rentner, River Partners
Justin Fredrickson, CA Farm Bureau Federation
Kaylee Allen, USFWS
Kristin Sicke
Kyle McHenry, Mechoopda THPO
Laverne Bill, Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation
Lori Price, DWR
Mary Jimenez, DWR
Meghan Hertel, Audubon
Mike Davis, American Rivers
Mike Healey, CDFW
Mike Myatt
Rene Henery, Trout Unlimited
Rod Wittler, BOR / CVPIA SIT

Rodd Kelsey, The Nature Conservancy

Roger Cornwell, River Garden Farms / RD 787 / RD 108

Roger Swanson, Wild Goose Club

Ryan Luster, The Nature Conservancy

Ted Trimble, Western Canal WD

Ward Charter, Ward Charter Farms