

Floodplains Reimagined Program

Phase I: The Landscape Scale Multi-Benefit

Floodplain Feasibility Study Project

Communications & Engagement Plan

Updated May 2024

Prepared for

Reclamation District 108

Prepared by

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Key Terms

Program Team

The term “Program Team” is intended to include local sponsor RD 1500, DWR, and consultants including ESA and Kearns & West, as well as other RFMP participating agencies and consultant support including Kjeldsen Sinnock Neudeck (KSN), cbec, and Douglas Environmental. Team members will work in close coordination to plan and implement stakeholder engagement activities.

Interested Party

The term “interested party” is used in this C&E Plan to reference anyone, including both individuals, organizations, and agency departments who may be impacted and/or have an interest in the information and recommendations that result from the Plan.

Engagement

The term “engagement” is used in the C&E Plan to encompass the full range of preliminary concepts and processes that will be used to both inform and involve interested parties in the development of the Plan.

Introduction

Floodplains Reimagined aims to improve floodplain connectivity for multiple purposes through voluntary collaborative partnerships with private landowners, sovereign tribal entities, government, and non-government representatives.

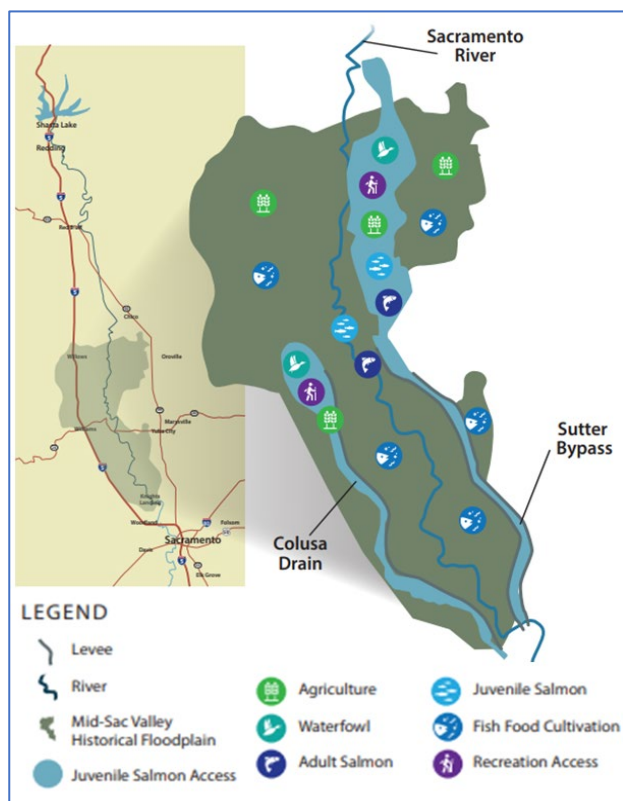
California Natural Resources Agency funded Phase I of the Floodplains Reimagined Program. In Phase I, Floodplains Reimagined began to evaluate the feasibility of improving floodplain functional connectivity by reintroducing low flows during the agricultural off-season, onto lands owned by willing landowners. During Phase I, stakeholders considered the feasibility and benefits of reconnecting the Sacramento River with its floodplains through new or modified river connections, flood conveyance, land-based management, in-river restoration, and fish enhancement activities opportunities.

This Floodplains Reimagined Program is working to coordinate efforts in concert with a constellation of efforts underway in the Colusa, Butte, and Sutter Basins in the Mid-Sacramento River Valley region to improve the floodplain functional connectivity to support salmon, birds, and agriculture.

Vision

To improve floodplain connectivity for multiple purposes through voluntary collaborative partnerships with private landowners, sovereign tribal entities, government, and non-government representatives.

Figure 1: Geographic Scope



As shown in Figure 1, the geographic scope of the Program includes an area along the Sacramento River corridor from Butte Sink at the north end to the top of the Yolo Bypass at the south end. The defining physical watershed and infrastructure features include: Butte Sink, Sutter Bypass and Colusa Drain.

The Program Team includes:

- Program Director – RD 108
- Program Manager & Engineering – KSN
- Facilitation Team – Kearns & West
- Technical Team – cbec, Cramer Fish Sciences, Point Blue, San Francisco Estuary Institute, and Aquatic Resources Consulting
- Larsen & Wurzel Associates – Process Advisors

Purpose of Document

This technical memorandum is one of several produced in support of the Floodplains Reimagined Landscape Scale Multi-Benefit Floodplain Feasibility Study Phase I. This specific technical memorandum provides a Communications and Engagement (C&E) Plan to function as a “roadmap” for the stakeholder engagement process for the Floodplains Reimagined Program. This C&E Plan will be a “living document;” it will be revisited and updated as needed.

Technical Memorandums produced in Phase I

1. Priorities & Objectives
2. **Communication and Engagement Plan**
3. Opportunities, Constraints & Considerations
4. Hydrodynamic Model Analysis
5. Various Evaluation Criteria
6. Scientific Uncertainties and Data Needs

Phase I Objectives

This plan has been designed to support the following objectives for the Feasibility Study Phase I.

- Support stakeholders to develop multi-benefit priorities and objectives and performance metrics.
- Support stakeholders to generate conceptual actions and scenarios for feasibility and performance analysis
- Evaluate the feasibility and benefits of the conceptual actions towards the multi-benefit priorities and objectives.
- Package the feasible and beneficial actions into a portfolio of actions in an Implementation Framework.
- Support landowners with Technical Assistance to develop further planning and evaluation of specific actions and evaluate whether they want to implement these actions.

Communications Objectives

Communications objectives that support the Phase I Feasibility Study objectives include:

- Build stakeholders’ understanding and participation in the Floodplains Reimagined planning effort.
- Provide stakeholders with meaningful opportunities to shape and participate in the development of the Floodplains Reimagined Program.
- Integrate stakeholder priorities and objectives from multiple credible and potentially opposing stakeholder groups into Floodplains Reimagined Program.
- Clarify relationship between Floodplains Reimagined and other related efforts.
- Rely on the considerable on-the-ground knowledge provided by stakeholders in the region.

- Ensure broad stakeholder participation and support for the Floodplains Reimagined evaluation process and support of the resulting Framework.

Guiding Principles

The Program Team will follow these principles in its communications and engagement approach:

- **Flexible and adaptive.** COVID-19 requires the Program team and stakeholders to be flexible and adaptive. It has and may continue to impact the Team's ability to engage stakeholders in traditional ways, such as through in-person meetings and workshops. Different stakeholders want to be engaged in different ways; we aim to be flexible and responsive to stakeholder needs. In addition, the Team will identify barriers to effective engagement early in the process (should they occur) and adapt the engagement process as needed.
- **Collaborative.** Conduct stakeholder engagement in an inclusive, open, and collaborative way. Collaboration is a key component for building buy-in.
- **Communicative.** The Program Team will introduce concepts and components of the Plan to stakeholders as early in the process as possible to foster an atmosphere of partnership and collaboration.
- **Transparent.** The Team will make information, process, and decisions transparent to stakeholders.
- **Accessible.** The Program Team will use a variety of methods to make sure anyone interested in Floodplains Reimagined can access information when it is convenient for them.
- **Trustworthy.** The program will work with trusted messengers to solicit information from certain groups including the duck hunting clubs and the private landowners.
- **Iterative.** The Team will engage stakeholders iteratively to provide information on multiple projects, plans, and ongoing processes. This will allow stakeholders to receive updates and provide input on multiple efforts in an efficient manner.
- **Empowering.** In addition to conducting direct engagement, the Program Team will engage selected stakeholders to serve as "key communicators." These key communicators will help further extend the reach of engagement efforts by communicating with their respective constituents and making sure their interests and priorities are considered in discussions that inform the Plan.

Interested Parties

This Plan organizes interested parties into the following main audiences, recognizing that there will be different interests and priorities across the landscape.

- Federal and State resource agencies
- Sovereign Tribal Nations
- Local Levee Maintaining Agencies
- Private Landowners
- Water Managers
- Conservation NGOs
- Academic Research Institutions
- Local government – County and Resource Conservation Districts

Description of Types of Interested Parties

- **Federal and State Agencies**
 - **CA Department of Water Resources** is responsible for developing and updating the Central Valley Flood Protection Plan (CVFPP) which has guided the State's participation in managing flood risk in areas protected by the State Plan of Flood Control (SPFC) since the CVFPP's adoption pursuant to the Central Valley Flood Protection Act (CVFPA) of 2008. DWR aims to improve flood management in the CVFPP Plan Area while incorporating habitat restoration and other multi-benefit objectives (including agricultural sustainability) into flood risk reduction projects. DWR is providing Proposition 1E funding to support the development of this Plan.
 - **California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), USACE, and US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)** are responsible for ensuring that impacts to endangered or threatened species from flood projects and activities are accurately accounted for and mitigated.
 - **State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB)** section 1707 and adjudication govern the water diversions in Butte Creek between Parrott-Phelan Diversion Dam and Gorrill Dam, before its confluence with the Sacramento River.
 - **Central Valley Flood Protection Board (CVFPB)** is the State regulatory agency responsible for ensuring that appropriate standards are met for the construction, maintenance, and protection of the Central Valley's flood control system. CVFPB works in partnership with LMAs, DWR, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to reduce the risk of catastrophic flooding in the Central Valley. Approval by the CVFPB is required for projects or uses which encroach into rivers, waterways, and floodways within and adjacent to Central Valley federal and State authorized flood control projects and within designated floodways adopted by CVFPB. CVFPB

approval is required to initiate certain uses or construction work, or any proposed project within these areas.

- **Sovereign Tribal Nations**

- See below for independent section on tribes.

- **Local Levee Maintaining Agencies (LMAs)**

Local levee maintenance agencies (LMAs) maintain the Sutter Bypass and Colusa Drain. These include Reclamation Districts (RDs) and State Maintenance Areas (MAs). DWR maintains the Tisdale Weir structure and Tisdale and Sutter Bypass channel areas within State ownership. Reclamation Districts (RDs) are special districts that are managed by elected boards and funded with taxes or assessments to property owners in the local area. There is also a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) in the planning area – Sutter Butte Flood Control Agency (SBFCA).

- **Local Government**

Local governments in the Plan Area, including Butte, Sutter, and Colusa Counties, are responsible for land use planning and oversight within their jurisdictions. Resource Conservation Districts and Groundwater Sustainability Agencies also play roles in local government.

- **Non-Governmental Organizations**

NGOs may include conservation groups, restoration groups, and water users associations.

- **Water Management Groups**

Sutter Bypass-Butte Slough Water Users Association, have specific interests in the development of the Plan related to the potential impacts or benefits to members land.

- **Academic Research Institutions**

Academic research institutions - UC Davis and Southwest Fisheries Science Center - have been studying the benefits of juvenile salmon rearing on ricefield floodplains.

Sovereign Tribal Nations

The Program invites federally recognized and non-recognized tribes to participate.

Some of these tribes and members of them own land in the Program area. Some inhabited this land since time immemorial and are interested in accessing the lands and resources again. Some of the tribes have interests due to the salmon that pass through this region.

The Program is inviting all these Tribes to participate at their preferred level of involvement: participating in certain groups, tracking only, or decline to participate at this time. They can change their level of participation as desired.

- The Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation
- Mechoopda Tribe
- Konkow Valley Band of Maidu
- Estom Yumeka Maidu Tribe of the Enterprise Rancheria
- Paskenta Band of Band of Nomlaki Indians
- Cachil Dehe Band of Wintun Indians of the Colusa Indian Community
- Buena Vista Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians
- Mooretown Rancheria of Maidu Indians
- Cortina Rancheria-Kletsel Dehe Band of Wintun Indians

Landowners

The following types of landowners have interests in the Program area:

- **Agricultural Landowners**
 - Agricultural lands include rice fields, orchards, and row crops.
 - Many rice growers also offer hunting leases and inundate their lands in wintertime.
 - Agricultural landowners are participants in many landowner financial incentive programs to support critical habitat for birds, pollinators, as well as healthy soils and groundwater.
- **Recreational Hunting Clubs**
 - Recreational hunting clubs and preserves are concentrated in Butte Sink and downstream into the Upper Sutter area just upstream of the Sutter Bypass.
 - Rice growers with hunting leases abound throughout the region.
- **State and Federal Agencies**
 - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Wildlife Refuges
 - CA Department of Fish and Wildlife Areas

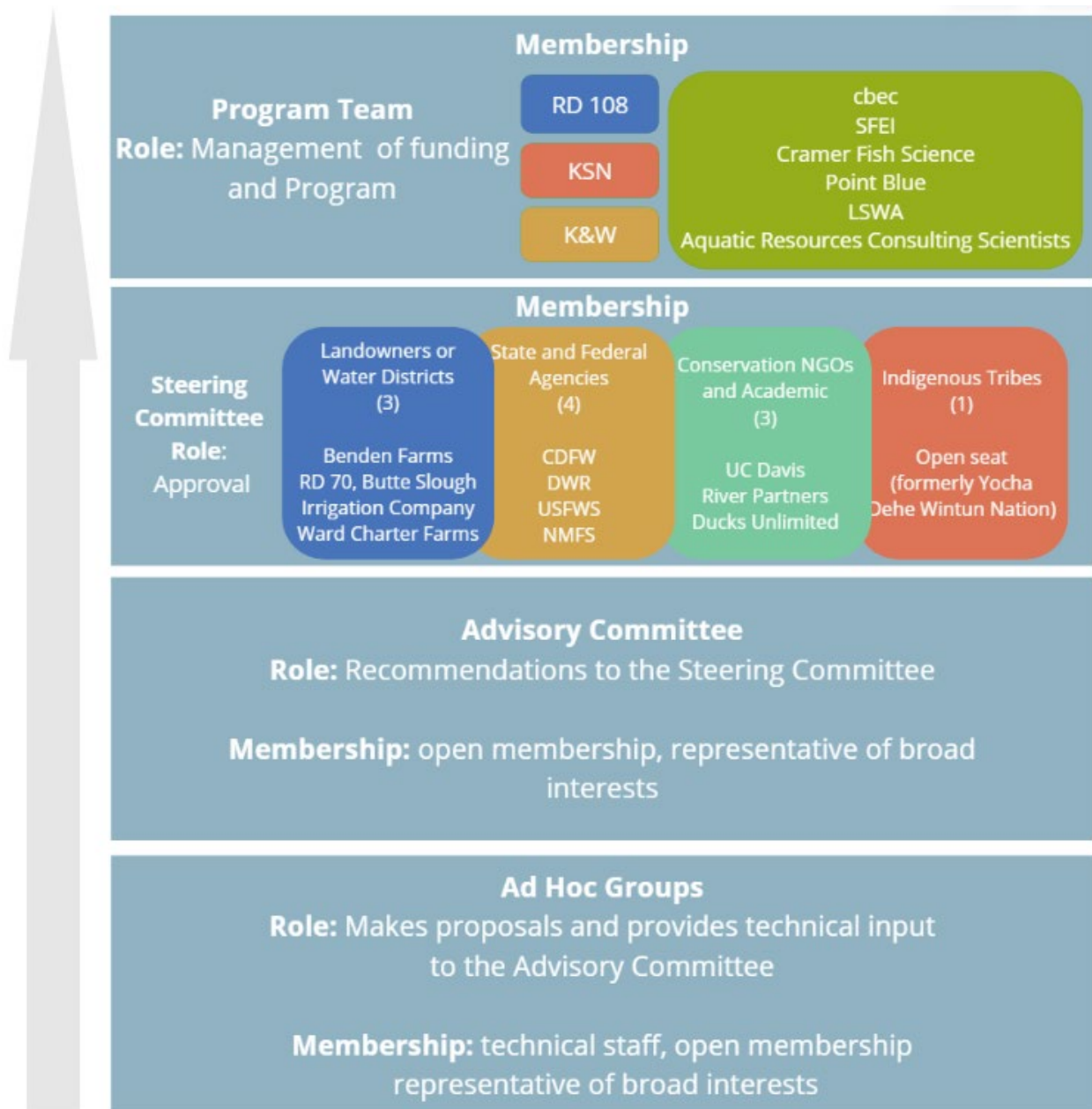
- Department of Water Resources Flood and Multi-benefit divisions
- **Non-governmental Organizations**
 - River Partners
 - Ducks Unlimited
 - CA Waterfowl Association
 - Audubon Society
- **Private Wetland Preserves and Mitigation Banks**
 - Westervelt
 - Wildlands
 - Llano Seco

Program Structure

The Floodplains Reimagined Charter outlines the Program’s structure, membership, roles, and decision-making.

This table illustrates the governance structure:

Figure 2: Floodplains Reimagined Governance Structure

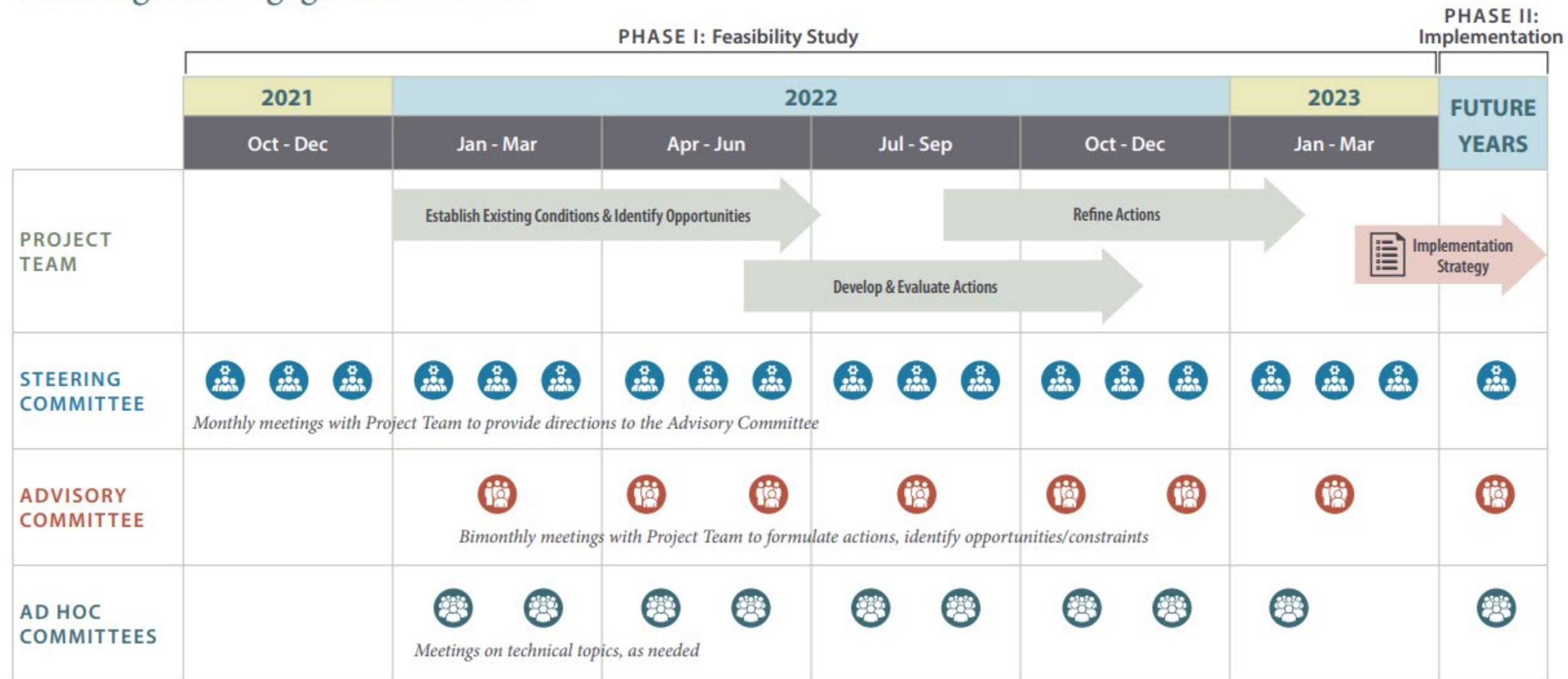


Schedule

The stakeholder engagement process will be planned and implemented around the schedule and milestones as follows. The schedule will be adapted as needed.

Floodplains Reimagined

Planning and Engagement Process



Engagement

This section is broken into three parts: general engagement, tribal engagement, landowner engagement, and agency engagement.

General Engagement

Information Materials

The Team will develop and disseminate materials to share information and ensure a common understanding of the Plan's purpose and scope and promote awareness of opportunities to provide input.

Providing consistent messaging about the Plan's purpose, scope and status will be a critical component of the outreach effort. The Team will develop outreach materials including a Plan Overview factsheet (and other brochures/factsheets as needed) that will be posted on the website and distributed during stakeholder meetings. The development of outreach materials will include translating technical information into a more accessible format for a general audience.

Materials will include:

- Program Brief
- Landowner Program Brief
- Charter
- Timeline Graphic
- Program Structure Graphic

Online & Digital Communications

- **Website**

The Team recommends the development of a cohesive Program website, similar to that of the [Lower Sutter Bypass Anadromous Fish Habitat Management Plan](#). The website will act as a central point of reference for the committee members and the general public, hosting documentation and updates. The website can also be designed to facilitate information sharing among and between the related efforts in the region and/or present case studies from around the nation.

- **Meeting Format**

Based on the initial assessment, participants prefer a mix of virtual and in-person meetings. When the meetings are for the entire region, participants suggested virtual meetings for accessibility and to eliminate travel time. For briefings of water districts and associations with existing in-person Board meetings, participants preferred the Program Team members attend in-person meetings.

- **E-News Updates and Notifications**

The Team will compile a database of names and contact information for email updates and notifications for Floodplains Reimagined.

- **Social Media**

The Program will not use social media platforms as the stakeholders interviewed said that they do not prefer social media to get their information.

Briefings

The Program Team will organize and conduct briefings and discussions between Program Team members and groups. The targeted meetings will orient groups to the Program, provide updates on baseline conditions, findings, as well as solicit feedback and discussion on preliminary concepts and evaluation criteria.

In addition, attending existing meetings is a resource efficient way to meet with interested parties. We can pair these briefings with site visits for technical assistance when appropriate.

Groups for briefings include:

Butte

- Butte Slough Water Association
- Western Water Canal District
- RD1004
- RD70 and Butte Slough Irrigation Company

Sutter Bypass

- Sutter Bypass-Butte Slough Water Users Association Meetings
- Lower Sutter Bypass Meetings

Colusa

- Colusa Drain Mutual Water Company
- Colusa Basin Drainage District

Agencies

- CDFW
- DWR Flood and Multi-benefit Divisions

General

- Tribal Ad Hoc Group – all tribes invited
- Central Valley Flood Protection Board Coordinating Committee
- Northern California Water Association meetings

Tribal Sovereign Nations Engagement

Tribes are not interest groups. Tribes are sovereign entities with indigenous perspectives and knowledge that can improve the quality of the Floodplains Reimagined Program. Tribal engagement offers a means for weaving Tribal input into planning and collaboration processes.

Tribal sovereign nations have been stewards of this region since time immemorial. Some Tribes currently own lands in the geographic region of Floodplains Reimagined.

Approach

1. Objectives
 - a. Invite Tribal Sovereign Nations that are federal and non-federally recognized. Include those upstream on the Upper Sacramento River and in the Program region.
 - b. Identify Tribal Sovereign Nations willing to explore multi-benefit opportunities through the Program.
 - c. Incorporate benefits to Tribal Sovereign Nations into multi-benefit concepts
 - d. Provide information for Tribal Sovereign Nations to evaluate benefits for their own interests.
 - e. Protect Tribal Sovereign Nations' sensitive cultural information in the course of development of maps and information.
2. Strategies
 - a. Create a Tribal Sovereign Nations only discussion space.
 - b. Include Tribal Sovereign Nations in the structure of the Program.
 - c. Tribal Sovereign Nations will speak for themselves. Do not speak on their behalf.
 - d. Work with existing trusted partners for Tribes in the region.
 - e. Invite Tribal Sovereign Nations from outside the region to provide information on successful Tribal Sovereign Nations' roles in collaborative watershed planning models.
 - f. Identify technical assistance opportunities and other resource opportunities to support Tribal Sovereign Nations to explore multi-benefit options.
 - g. Tribal Sovereign Nations shape their own participation venues and preferences.
3. Tactics
 - a. Orient Tribal Sovereign Nations to the Floodplains Reimagined Program.
 - b. Solicit interests and concerns; opportunities and constraints.
 - c. Engage in generation of preliminary concepts.
 - d. Solicit feedback on process, baseline conditions, and preliminary concepts.
 - e. Offer technical assistance to explore options.
 - f. Offer early consultation with Tribes should there be a project plan in development (based on input from Tribal Ad Hoc Group).
 - g. Develop maps of an appropriate granularity to avoid showing cultural resources (based on input from Tribal Ad Hoc Group).

Landowner Engagement

Landowner engagement will be critical to the success of the Program. This Program is a proactive, voluntary collaborative effort to protect water rights and existing land uses.

The Program Team will hold landowner meetings and briefings – both one-on-one conversations and larger gatherings. Landowners will be included in the various geographic subgroups, as well as other subgroups that form to review agricultural, recreation, and multi-benefit interests.

Ducks Unlimited and California Waterfowl will have significant roles in maintaining open and transparent communications with landowners. They can provide strategic guidance to the Program Team on connecting with and meeting the interests of hunting clubs, private wetlands. Additionally, both entities will be necessary in soliciting any feedback from landowners, of which many are unable to fully participate in the Program committee meetings.

Landowner Approach

The Program will take the following approach based on the participants' interests, opportunities, and risks. The objectives and tasks are as follows:

- Objectives
 - Identify landowners willing to explore multi-benefit opportunities through the Program.
 - Develop a shared understanding of the interests and concerns among landowners and other parties.
 - Develop an understanding of the landowners' desired information to inform decisions.
- Landowner Characteristics
 - Property around existing and potential river connections.
 - Engage landowners managing lands with potential for winter inundation on private wetlands, rice fields, and lands inside the river corridor.
 - First adopters of Fish Food Incentive Programs and other Ecological Incentive Programs.
- Tactics
 - Orient landowners and water districts to the Floodplains Reimagined Program
 - Solicit interests and concerns; opportunities and constraints.
 - Engage in generation of preliminary concepts.
 - Solicit feedback on process, baseline conditions, and preliminary concepts.
 - Maximize use of small in-person meetings at locations convenient for the landowners.
 - Conduct landowner engagement at the subregional level or in smaller groups.
 - Apply focused technical assistance to test the program through demonstration projects.
- Key Messages to Landowners
 - Landowners reserve the right to decide if, when, and how to inundate their land.
 - Landowners reserve the right to decide if, when and how to conserve and reestablish riparian vegetation or other habitat types on their land.
 - Program success depends on Landowner (and their neighbors) participation.
 - Technical Assistance is available for project development.

Landowner Meetings

The Program Team will conduct landowner meetings in the three subregions to introduce the project, solicit interests and concerns, opportunities and constraints and ideas for preliminary concepts. The Program Team will also brief water districts and associations on the baseline output from the model and initial results of Phase I river connections.

- Subregional Informational Meetings
 - Sutter Bypass
 - Various informational briefings and solicit landowner input at Reclamation Districts
 - Briefings at RD70 and Sutter Bypass Butte Slough Water Users Association
 - Colusa
 - Subregional Informational Meeting at RD108
 - Briefings at Colusa Basin Drainage District and Colusa Drain Mutual Water Company, Maxwell Irrigation District
 - Small informational meetings around preliminary concepts for river connections
 - Butte
 - Subregional Informational Meeting at RD108
 - Briefing at water districts: RD1004 and Western Canal Water District
 - Briefing the Butte Slough Water Users Association including participants on the east and west sides of Butte Creek.
 - Briefing at Rice Commission Workshops.
- Subregional Baseline and Preliminary Concept Development
 - Individual landowner meetings
 - Landowners from each subregion have requested to meet with KSN or RD108 to explore development of preliminary concepts for winter inundation of their property or in their subregion.
 - Small subregional meetings
 - Facilitate discussions among groups of 2-4 landowners on scenario development of river connections and preliminary concepts on their properties.
 - Advisory Committee meetings and Ad-Hoc Groups – landowners invited
 - The technical team developed preliminary conceptual river connection modifications that could support winter-time inundation to improve floodplain connectivity and juvenile salmon rearing as well as other multi-benefits.
 - The Advisory Committee will work in breakout groups to discuss these concepts, provide feedback, and suggest additional concepts.
 - Sutter Bypass subregional portfolio development
 - As requested by the Sutter Bypass stakeholder group led by the Sutter Bypass Water Users Association, KSN and cbec work with Sutter Bypass group to evaluate and develop the subregional scenarios for winter-time inundation. This work is funded by the Floodplains Reimagined Technical Assistance.

- Technical Assistance Development
 - KSN and RD108 will help landowners develop applications for technical assistance. These can be initiated by the landowners individually or in groups.
 - Individual property owners
 - KSN is fielding requests from individual property owners to explore development of planning projects for winter-time inundation.
 - Meetings included different types of landowners: rice growers, NGOs, mitigation banks, private wetland preserves, hunting club owners, water districts, and water associations.
 - Subregional groups
 - Kearns & West will work with KSN and RD108 to identify groups of individual landowners who could benefit from forming subregional groups to apply for technical assistance together.

Agency Engagement

The Program Team will provide briefings and discussions with DWR and CDFW according to the following objectives and approach.

Objectives

- Shared understanding between agency policy and line staff.
- Shared understanding of connected and related projects to the Floodplains Reimagined Program.
- Shared understanding of agencies' interests and concerns that can guide Floodplains Reimagined generation of multi-benefit concepts.
- DWR projects take into account Floodplains Reimagined multi-benefit objectives when developing DWR projects.

Approach

The approach to briefings with DWR and CDFW will include the following organizational divisions and topics.

DWR

- Participants DWR
 - DWR Flood and Multi-Benefit Divisions
- Topics
 - Orientation and briefings.
 - Solicit DWR flood control and multi-benefit interests and concerns.
 - Review of participating divisions and staff.
 - Incorporation of multi-benefits into projects in the region.

CDFW

- Participants CDW
 - Region 2 North Central Region
 - Including Colusa, Sutter, and Butte Counties

- Sacramento Bypass, Yolo Bypass
 - Rancho Cordova
 - Wildlife Management
 - Fisheries
 - Chico Field Office
- Region 4 Central Region
- Water Branch
- Conservation Engineering Branch
- Nesting Bird Habitat Incentive Program
- Lands Program, Wetlands Conservation Program
- Topics
 - Orientation and briefings.
 - Solicit DWR flood control and multi-benefit interests and concerns.
 - Review of participating divisions and staff.
 - Incorporation of multi-benefits into projects in the region.

Internal Program Communication

Program Team

The Program Team members and roles consists of the following:

- [Reclamation District 108](#)
Program director and grant recipient
- [Kjeldsen Sinnock Neudeck \(KSN\)](#)
Project manager and engineering support
- [Kearns & West](#)
Stakeholder involvement and facilitation services
- [Larsen Wurzel & Associates](#)
Process advisors
- [cbec](#)
Hydrologic & hydraulic model development
- [SFEI](#)
Technical Team support, salmon benefits model development
- [Point Blue](#)
Bioenergetics model development
- [Cramer Fish Sciences](#)
Salmon benefits model development
- **Aquatic Resources Consulting Scientists**
Habitat suitability criteria development

Draft Document Development & Review

The process for developing the Final Feasibility Study will involve the drafting of multiple interim deliverables.

Engagement activities will align with the development and review of these document to ensure that stakeholders have the opportunity to review and comment on these interim deliverables. Generally, the sequence for reviewing and providing input will be as follows:

1. Program Team member drafts proposed approach and presents to Steering Committee.
2. Steering Committee reviews and provides guidance, and approves, as appropriate.
3. Program Team incorporates Steering Committee input.
4. Ad Hoc Groups provide substantive information to develop the product for updates and proposal to the Advisory Committee.
5. Program Team incorporates the input, as appropriate and/or documents divergence of viewpoints.
6. Advisory Committee reviews and provides additional substantive input and advises the Steering Committee.

7. Program Team incorporates Advisory Committee input into products, as appropriate and frames the conversation for the Steering Committee.
8. Steering Committee reviews and approves or gives guidance for changes.
9. Facilitation Team documents areas of convergence and outstanding divergence.