

Delta Levees and Habitat Advisory Committee &  
California Bay-Delta Public Advisory Committee  
Delta Levees and Habitat Subcommittee  
July 2, 2004  
Room 435, Resources Building  
Draft Meeting Notes

**1. Welcome/Self Introductions/Announcements**

Bob Orcutt of the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) who normally chairs the meeting was not present. Kent Nelson of the Department of Water Resources (DWR) filled in for Bob Orcutt and called the meeting to order at approx. 9:20 a.m. Those in attendance introduced themselves. The list of attendees is attached.

**2. Minutes of June 4, 2004 meeting**

The minutes of the June 4, 2004 meeting were accepted as presented by general consent.

**3. Update on Bay-Delta Levee Program SB 34/AB 360 Program**

Curt Schmutte of DWR passed out the Delta Levee Maintenance Subventions - Program Status handout. (See attachment 1)

Curt mentioned that after the Jones Tract levee break, DWR has a commitment to do a "look back" to evaluate how DWR handled the situation. DWR currently has \$200,000 in Special Projects funds for emergency response but would need a bigger dollar amount for improved emergency response capability.

The President of the United States signed a FEMA declaration yesterday, 7/1/04. Signing of this declaration means that the federal government will pay 75 percent of eligible flood expenses. The California Department of Water Resources and local reclamation districts will submit their costs due to the levee break to the State Office of Emergency Services. Adjacent land owners could perhaps get funds for crop damage through a loan program that would be set up as a result of the FEMA declaration.

Tom Zuckerman mentioned that there is extensive seepage on adjacent islands. In some locations there are active boils moving material and seepage in other locations. Victoria Island and Woodward Island suffered boils from the Jones Tract flooding which were moving material. Bacon Island reportedly is experiencing increased seepage flow but not boils.

Ford Construction Company was awarded the contract for pumping out 114,000 ac-ft of water from Jones Tract. The contract terms call for the pumping to be completed by October 15, 2004.

Curt said that the Levee Program is looking at what is could do differently in the future to avoid or mitigate the threat to levees from rodents burrowing or old pipes embedded in the levees. We could set more traps or clear the levees by doing more inspections. A

biological approach could be to monitor the waterside of the levees or do a rodent study. A technical approach could be using sonar to detect voids. Curt mentioned that a firm working for the Corps of Engineers has a device with the technology to see voids.

Gil Cosio of MBK remembered a contractor 20 years ago that had a device that was towed behind a vehicle down the levee that detected anomalies in the levee (mostly metal). It was suggested that a general list be compiled stating on which islands this technology was used. Although with newer technology today it may be worth resurveying. Curt mentioned that some surveys have been done recently on Staten Island for archaeological artifact detection. Gil and Curt will follow up on finding out more about the void detection devices.

Gil said that the worst areas to detect beaver activity are the ones with rock. DFG does not currently have an ongoing beaver trapping program. DFG wardens or the local reclamation district managers would be the most likely to see beavers.

#### **4. Update on Department of Fish and Game AB 360 Program**

Kent Nelson of DWR gave the report for DFG that was e-mailed to him by Bob Orcutt. DFG inspected Upper and Lower Jones Tract to get a better idea of levee restoration problems and progress. Tom Rosten of DFG saw boils on Woodward Island. No levee work was awaiting DFG permits or approvals at the time of the Jones Tract levee break and none at this time. DFG is working with DWR on CEQA and Endangered Species Act compliance for the New Hope project. They are also assisting DWR on the planting plan for Decker Island Phase II. Phase II was opened to tidal action several weeks ago. A bathymetric survey will continue on Decker Island from Phase I to II and fish monitoring will continue. DFG has signed all work agreements to date from DWR and Bob appreciates the early consultation DWR staff has provided.

#### **5. Presentation on Riparian Habitat Joint Venture**

Ann Chrisney, coordinator of the Riparian Habitat Joint Venture, gave a presentation in order to seek possible opportunities for collaboration between this organization and the habitat restoration in the AB 360 program.

Partners in Flight, an international initiative for land bird conservation (migratory song birds mostly) is the base from which Riparian Habitat Joint Venture (RHJV) was established. Riparian habitat is the most important and threatened habitat for song birds. RHJV was modeled after the Central Valley Joint Venture.

The vision of RHJV is to restore and enhance a functioning network of riparian habitats across California to support long term viability of native birds and associated species. The mission of RHJV is to provide leadership and guidance.

RHJV is not a regulatory body. It has a board of directors from 19 organizations that meet six times a year. RHJV is trying to create bioregional working groups. One of Ann's goals is to develop a comprehensive riparian habitat map.

A bird plan was developed which gives habitat descriptions of riparian factors affecting a list of focal species and population targets. The plan has a range of recommendations such as protection, conservation, restoration, management ideas, monitoring, research, and policy issues. Birds are a good tool for conservation. They are diverse and occupy a lot of different areas, are easy to survey and territorial. There is also a big economic constituent associated with birds due to the large number of bird watchers.

RHJV committees are the main working entities of the coalition. RHJV advocates for projects that support good science. It accepts new members and anyone is welcome to attend the board meetings. It was suggested that the Flood Control Association would be a valuable board member.

Tom asked how far on the land side of levees the riparian corridor would occur. Ann said riparian corridors can vary depending on hydrology, etc. They can be anywhere between 3 meters and 5 miles. Riparian corridors are transitional areas.

Margit Aramburu of the Delta Protection Commission mentioned that it would be good for Ann to contact the Bay-Delta Authority Ecosystem Restoration Program since they are working on the Delta Regional Ecosystem Restoration Implementation Plan. Frank Wernette of the Department of Fish and Game in the Stockton office is the contact person.

Curt mentioned several DWR projects that are ongoing that may be good projects for RHJV to keep in mind. The projects are: 1) Decker Island Phase II planting, 2) Dutch Slough 1,200 acre tidal marsh riparian restoration project in Oakley, 3) North Delta 1,500 acre McCormick-Williamson Tract and portions of Staten Island, 4) Franks Tract, 5) Delta In-Channel Islands, and 6) Suisun Marsh restoration plan.

Michael Perrone of DWR mentioned that it would be advantageous for DWR to come and talk about the relevant projects at the next RHJV board meeting. Kent Nelson of DWR would be the contact person.

**Bay-Delta Public Advisory Committee  
Levees and Habitat Subcommittee**

**1. BDPAC Levees and Habitat Subcommittee Co-Chair Report**

Tom Zuckerman chaired the meeting. Tom apologized for the short notice about bringing issues to the subcommittee that he needs to address next week at the BDPAC meeting. He handed out a page of the BDPAC packet that pertained to the levee program. (See attachment 2) The three issues he wanted to discuss were the Delta Improvements Package (DIP), the 10-year finance plan, and the levee emergency response plan. He has reviewed the recent draft of the DIP and has provided some comments in writing to the Authority. He said there is an ongoing linkages problem in the DIP. He received a call last week from Tim Ramirez of the Authority indicating there may be a meeting on Tuesday prior to BDPAC with primary stakeholders. Tom indicated to Tim that he felt there would be a number of people would want to comment on the DIP. This is a critical time to bring up levee issues since after the Jones Tract levee break the levee program is currently in the spotlight.

The next BDPAC meeting is July 8, 2004 at the Authority office at 650 Capitol Mall. Tom's recommendation to the BDPAC subcommittee is to strive to achieve some basic level of funding for the levee program as a condition of increased State Water Project exports that are being contemplated under the DIP. Funds for enlarging levees should be lumped into Special Projects with the bulk of the money used for bringing levees up to the PL 84-99 standard. The state then has the flexibility to pay up to 100% of the cost so poorer districts wouldn't be left out of the opportunity of being able to bring levees up to a higher standard. There was a concern expressed to make sure the Special Project funds were used for those purposes and not filtered off to other projects. Also if Federal money were to become available as a result of legislation the levee funding scenario would have to be reevaluated.

The 10 year finance options plan was discussed. Based on this plan the levee program is shown as a \$42 million/year program. If this funding was split 50-50 between Subventions and Special Projects as is traditionally done some reclamation districts would have limited capacity to participate by way of cost share.

When the emergency response plan was developed many years ago it was based on a 3-pronged approach. 1) viable ongoing levee maintenance, 2) financial ability to get a commitment to sign contracts early, and 3) recognition that you cannot prevent every

levee failure and we need a capacity built into the water export system to bridge during an outage.

In the Jones Tract levee break the ability to sign contracts was delayed a day or two. Tom stressed that the levee program needs the immediate financial capability to respond. A \$10 million emergency response fund has been proposed in the past. This amount would be adequate for one island but would need to be increased for more than one levee break. Curt indicated that the decision about having a pot of money set aside for emergency response has to come from the top down. Margit suggested revising the Emergency Response portion of the Levee Multi-Year Program Plan based on lessons learned from Jones Tract. The levee program plan is available on the Authority website under BDPAC meeting materials – Levees.

DWR uses the terms Subventions and Special Projects and CALFED uses the terms Base Level Protection and Special Improvements. Overlapping of these terms has caused some confusion when it comes to funding.

Tom will bring the comments of this subcommittee to the BDPAC meeting next week. He will also continue discussion on the DIP, 10 year finance plan, and Emergency Response at the next levee subcommittee meeting next month.

## **2. Bay-Delta Program Report**

Patricia Fernandez of the Authority confirmed with Tom Zuckerman that he will prepare a letter to BDPAC. The letter will state that in view of the recent Jones Tract levee break there are some changes to be made to the Levee Multi-Year Program Plan and the DIP MOU which represent the Subcommittee's comments as discussed today. Additional Authority staff will continue to attend the subcommittee meetings to further discuss and answer questions about the DIP and 10-Year Finance Plan. The 10-year Finance Plan goes to BDPAC in September and to the Authority in October for final approval. Final comments are due by early September.

## **3. Adjournment**

The next meeting will be held Friday, August 6 in the Resources Building, Room 435. The meeting adjourned at approx. 11:15 a.m.