

**CALFED Bay-Delta Program
Working Landscapes Subcommittee
August 1, 2002
Resources Building, 1416 9th St, Room 1131
Draft Meeting Summary**

Subcommittee web site:

<http://calfed2.ca.gov/BDPAC/Subcommittees/WorkingLandscapesSubcommittee.shtml>

1. Introductions

The meeting began with a welcome from the co-chairs Ryan Broddrick, Ducks Unlimited and Denny Bungarz, Glenn Co. Board of Supervisors. CALFED Executive Director Patrick Wright explained that work group was changed to a subcommittee to elevate the stature of these important issues under discussion. The subcommittee will report directly to the Bay Delta Public Advisory Committee (BD PAC), of which Ryan and Denny are members. Patrick thanked Ryan and Denny for their willingness to chair the subcommittee. Patrick also noted the large and diverse attendance of the meeting; roughly 40 people were present from a broad variety of organizations and interests.

Anjanette Martin, speaking on behalf of the Northern California Water Association and the California Farm Bureau stated her concern that participation from the farming community was lacking today (Representatives from the Farm Bureau were unable to attend the meeting). She also asked that and that the first priority of the subcommittee should be on the Record of Decision agricultural commitments. NCWA still stands behind their Partnership for Restoration Paper and is supportive of the Sacramento River Conservation Area Forum Good Neighbor Policy. They also encourage an opportunity to include agriculture-friendly programs in future bonds. The ideas presented in the draft workplan are a good starting point.

2. Membership and Ground Rules

The membership of the Working Landscapes Subcommittee was discussed. The co-chairs proposed that the Subcommittee membership be open to those who participate and show up to the meetings, similar to the CALFED Watershed and Environmental Justice Subcommittees. It was noted that this will give more voice to regional representation. Virginia Cahill, Attorney with the Department of Justice, cautioned that the advantage of fixed membership is to assure complete representation from the appropriate stakeholders. Ms. Cahill also briefed the members on the protocol for making recommendations to the BD PAC and described the 10-day meeting notification requirement, conflict of interest guidelines, and the requirement that the Subcommittee will not act on items that are not on the agenda. Three handouts addressing these issues were distributed. If people have questions on these issues they were advised to contact Ms. Cahill directly at (916) 322-5647, Virginia_cahill@doj.ca.gov.

Broddrick also stressed that that the Subcommittee will not be making recommendations on funding for individual projects, but will focus on developing broader policy and program directions for the BDPAC.

Tim Ramirez, with the Resources Agency, noted that the discussion regarding membership applies to the public; agencies will be participating as well. It was also noted that there is no program, program manager or budget in CALFED for Working Landscapes.

3. Subcommittee Goals Mission

A draft mission, goal and vision statement for the subcommittee was distributed. Comments on the draft document are due by August 13 and may be sent to Casey Walsh Cady with the California Department of Food and Agriculture; ccady@cdfa.ca.gov; (916) 651-9447; fax (916) 657-5017.

4. Draft Workplan

The subcommittee was also asked to review and provide comments to the proposed subcommittee draft workplan (draft version: June 7, 2002). This draft was prepared by staff in collaboration with Delta Protection Commission (DPC), California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) and Department of Conservation (DOC) and CALFED management based on the prior work group's input. It was recognized that the funding amounts are very preliminary and no funding is secured for any of the items in the workplan. However there are a series of potential funding sources, including the November water bond. The Subcommittee will need to make allocation recommendations to BD PAC.

(Note this draft is available on CALFED web site:

<http://calfed2.ca.gov/BDPAC/Subcommittees/WorkingLandscapesSubcommittee.shtml>)

In the context of the work plan, Michelle Stevens with the Sacramento/San Joaquin River Comprehensive Study (Comp Study) discussed her efforts to draft a paper characterizing wildlife friendly agriculture. She would appreciate feedback on the document. The document will be sent out to the e-mail list of the subcommittee and comments can be provided directly to her. Michelle stated that this effort is really a synthesis of existing efforts and that her goals are to describe a landscape where win-win solutions can be developed for flood protection, agriculture and habitat. She noted that the paper is for Comp Study use, and would hope it could be recognized by CALFED as well.

Tim Ramirez echoed that this conversation is relevant and potentially helpful because the Comp Study has adopted the restoration goals of the CALFED Ecosystem Restoration Program. Tom Wehri also felt that in light of other efforts going on like the Flood Plain Management Task Force, this effort to establish a common notion of "wildlife friendly agriculture" with a common language would be useful.

John McCaull, American Farmland Trust expressed his concern that the definition should be specific as to species and suggested that the Subcommittee be briefed by CALFED Science Program or other appropriate party on the particular species of interest and their overlap with agricultural lands.

Randy Gould with the US Forest Service asked for clarification from the group on the general scope of the Subcommittee and whether it included forest lands. The response was that forest lands are included in the CALFED solution area and that general definitions of agriculture include forestry.

Nita Vail with California Rangeland Trust asked whether it would be possible to have a map produced that showed the CALFED solution area with an overlay of agricultural lands on a regional basis (prime ag lands and/or grazing lands). It was noted that the draft workplan includes a section on mapping. It was suggested that the next meeting include an opportunity for agencies to share their mapping/GIS resources. The Department of Conservation and the Legacy Project are two entities that may be able to assist in this effort.

Eric Vink, DOC, suggested that the draft workplan Goal #2 - Minimize, Mitigate Adverse CALFED Impacts on Agricultural Resources, be woven into all the elements of CALFED, instead of as a separate goal to "mop up" after CALFED projects are implemented. He suggested that the focus should be more on making advances in the area of mitigation and pre-mitigation. It is critically important that impacts to agricultural lands be addressed at all levels.

Margit Aramburu, DPC, commented that the American Farmland Trust will cooperate with the Delta Protection Commission on developing a Delta agricultural protection assessment which will include a section on agricultural mitigation strategies.

5. USDA Farm Bill Update

Helen Flach with USDA/NRCS provided the Subcommittee with updated information on how the conservation elements in the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Farm Bill) will be implemented in California.

- There are new farm bill monies to be obligated by 9/30/02. For the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, NRCS- California has previously received \$ 7.3 million; they have also received an additional \$7.7 million. They have roughly \$6 million dollars in project request backlog, so they do not anticipate difficulties in spending the EQIP funds.
- The State Technical Committee consults with NRCS on technical implementation of the Farm Bill in California, but does not have a role in reviewing or selecting individual projects. Local ranking procedures will be in place. All USDA/NRCS conservation programs have a local component. USDA does direct local entities on what issues are important. Generally the statewide staff determines the allocation of funding go to each county.
- The newly passed version of the Farm Bill has eliminated geographic priority areas and raised the amount of an individual contract (\$450,000 cap). Due to the increased funding, applicants have augmented the funding request of their projects, which has resulted in no net addition of projects.
- The 2003 rules for EQIP will be published in the fall 2002. She hopes that these rules will provide a greater level of flexibility in program implementation.

Broddrick asked if there would be an opportunity for CALFED to provide cost-share.

Flach replied that local overlap is there in terms of water quality, habitat and water supply. A major hurdle for USDA/NRCS is that there will be no new staff to assist in the implementation of the conservation programs. The Working Landscapes Subcommittee could have a role in assisting NRCS become more efficient. Specifically there are significant needs for on-the-ground technical assistance for agricultural producers, and assistance with permitting. Other obstacles include Endangered Species issues, related concerns about losing flexibility in land management, and other regulatory compliance.

Flach reported that NRCS has also received notice that they will receive \$370,000 in 2002 for the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program. This program is supposed to give priority to threatened and endangered species, but often they do not have many applications that cover these species (more for ducks and pheasants).

Flach said that NRCS would like to have a broader-scale program which maximizes its program dollars on a corridor/watershed approach. The applications could be submitted as a group, but would be processed individually. There are partnership opportunities here to work with landowners in the area. Leveraged funds will also significantly increase the overall allotment to California for a specific program. At the current time, not a lot of interest in these programs has come from the San Joaquin Valley.

Tom Wehri, Exec. Director of the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts also stated that there is a lack of people to assist growers in the field. Most RCD's have no more funding to fill this field assistance gap. The challenge is how to get technical assistance out to the field in order to roll out the Farm Bill and demonstrate to Washington D.C. that California deserves its regional fair share of Farm Bill funds.

Bob Neale with Sustainable Conservation commented that smaller organizations and non-profits, such as RCD's, typically spend a significant amount of time in grant writing and report writing. There is a need for long term grants for RCD's for their activities and staff positions.

Neale also stated that regulatory permitting is a key to the success of a number of projects. If a grower wants to do a WHIP project, it does not make getting the necessary permitting any easier. He suggested that a need for larger programmatic permits that streamline the process for individual projects.

Dave Smith with the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) discussed how DFG has worked cooperatively with NRCS. The Northern Central Valley Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program successfully negotiated a Section 7 consultation with USFWS and got a biological opinion on a programmatic level which provided a blanket incidental take permit. Farmers concerns evaporated. This may be a model we can use.

Smith has also been working with NRCS on the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), where they demonstrated that when the state provides funds, USDA increased California's state share. In this case, DFG provided \$3.5 million.

Smith sees three different levels of wildlife habitat on agricultural lands:

- a) Agricultural land is wildlife habitat. The NRCS Farmland Protection Program and the Grassland Reserve Program recognize the value of agricultural land.
- b) The working landscapes annual incentive payments: Conservation Security Program. This program would fit well with CALFED. For example, one practice that could qualify would be cost-sharing on post-harvest flooding.
- c) Interim Wildlife Program: Such as the CRP – a 10-year set aside where there is not a long term conversion out of agriculture.

Smith also views the lack of on-the-ground technical assistance as very significant. He noted that the states that have a local funding delivery to match the Farm Bill funds are those that successful.

Broddrick posed the question, *What can California do to deliver more farm bill funds to California?*

Tim Ramirez suggested that the stakeholders need to press this issue, and not just the agencies.

John McCaull felt that from his perspective, CALFED has not recognized or documented the benefits that can be (or are already being) derived from NRCS-funded projects. There is a need to credit the work already done in the past. Tim Ramirez said that CALFED management is following up on this (USDA/NRCS programs are in CALFED Category B).

A couple of people recommended that the committee also include water quality in its discussions as this is an area that working landscapes can also positively influence. Steve Shaffer said that the agriculture can be the unifying element and this can complement existing programs.

Patrick Wright suggested that members develop specific actions that can be packaged to increase California's share of farm bill dollars. It will take a group of stakeholders to do this; CALFED has the tools and funding but it is scattered. Areas that need to be addressed include:

- 1) Development of regional applications for CREP
- 2) Comments on proposed rulemaking
- 3) Staff for field level technical assistance
- 4) Existing matches

Tom Wehri suggested looking at the Department of Conservation's report and recommendations on Watershed Protection Program.

6. Science Agenda for Working Landscapes

It was recognized that there is an opportunity for the CALFED Science Program to engage on working landscape and wildlife friendly agriculture issues in terms of formulating science questions, monitoring, and socio-economic issues, including cost/benefits of various management approaches and practices.

There was recognition that there is a need for a broader discussion on these issues and their prioritization. Broddrick commented that monitoring is critical in terms of documenting long term success.

7. US Fish and Wildlife Service Agricultural Waterfowl Incentive Program

Dale Garrison, with US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), gave a presentation on the Agricultural Waterfowl Incentive Program. This program was mandated under CVPIA and in the fall of 1997 it began providing funds for growers to flood their lands post-harvest, creating supplemental habitat for waterfowl species. Currently 40,000 acres are enrolled in the program and funding is set to sunset in 2003 (funding is secured for one more growing season). Funding is used to offset pumping costs. Growers must be "fish-friendly", i.e. water must be screened or pumped, and is only available to growers in the CVP service area. He said that he receives many inquiries from areas beyond CVP wanting to participate.

Garrison reported that participating growers farm corn, barley, wheat and rice. The program has been very successful in attracting a wide array of waterfowl that provide benefits to the growers in assisting with decomposition of the grain stubble. Dispersion of the waterfowl population into these areas also decreases the incidence of avian diseases. Hunting is encouraged on the lands.

The program allocated \$1 million in funds the first 4 years; in the last 2 years funding has only been \$500,000. The program requires a cost-share, ideally a 50 – 50 split, but depends on the cost of pumping. Garrison that a state match could open the program to non-CVP growers.

There was recognition that if approved for California, the newly created Conservation Security Program of the 2002 Farm Bill may also provide funds for post-harvest flooding.

Garrison can be contacted at (916) 414-6728, dale_garrison@fws.gov

8. California Wilderness Coalition Report

Ben Wallace, with the California Wilderness Coalition gave a brief summary of his organization's recently released report titled *Wild Harvest: Farming for Wildlife and Profitability*. The report addresses conservation issues on private lands in California and includes 28 recommendations focusing on areas of policy coordination, tax incentives, land preservation, market rewards, barriers to overcome, and increasing access to funding, especially increasing California's share of the Farm Bill funds.

Wallace also reported on a Working Group he has convened to develop a proposal for a state version of the Conservation Security Program (CSP), the Private Land Stewardship. CSP is a new program of the Farm Bill that will provide financial and technical assistance to those who have practiced good stewardship on their agricultural lands and incentives for those who want to do more. Rules for this program are under development. Preliminary budget discussions in Congress would narrow this program to Iowa on a pilot basis.

For a copy of the report, contact Wallace at (530) 758-0380, ben@calwild.org.

9. Public Comment

None.

Next meeting was set for September 5, 2002 from 1:30 – 5:00, location to be determined. (Sacramento). Participants were reminded to provide comments on the draft subcommittee vision and workplan. These documents are available on the CALFED Working Landscapes Subcommittee web site:

<http://calfed2.ca.gov/BDPAC/Subcommittees/WorkingLandscapesSubcommittee.shtml>).