

COLUSA SUBREACH NEWS

Issue 4, March, 2008

HYDRAULIC MODELING SHOWS FLOOD CAPACITY REMAINS

Flood flow levels on the Sacramento River between Princeton and Colusa are generally below those established in 1957 when the "Design Flow" standard was set. This positive news comes from a state-of-the-art hydraulic model of the entire Colusa Subreach that was developed to answer questions raised by local landowners about flooding and to help guide Colusa Subreach Planning. This new engineering analysis has been reviewed and endorsed by State and private flood experts. Agreement with the modeling results has come from the California Department of Water Resources and a well-known water resources engineer, Fran Borcalli. Borcalli was chosen by local representatives to perform "peer review" of this new floodway analysis.

The two-dimensional hydraulic model considers the existing river channel, topography, land use, and vegetation in the Colusa Subreach. It uses a powerful computer that performs many thousands of complex calculations to yield the model results. The model and related analysis were developed by Ayres Associates. Ayres engineers are recognized as experts on the Sacramento River and they annually survey levee erosion and repair needs for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The Ayres analysis also evaluated the effect of large woody debris on flood levels and how proposed wildlife habitat restoration projects may affect flood levels and erosion on the levees and neighboring farm lands. The report documents that replanting of native vegetation on eight potential sites will not cause flood level or erosion problems. The Ayres report was utilized by the Reclamation Board in December when they approved a State plan to restore wildlife habitat on the Colusa-Sacramento State Recreation Area as part of the Tisdale Bypass Sediment Removal Project.

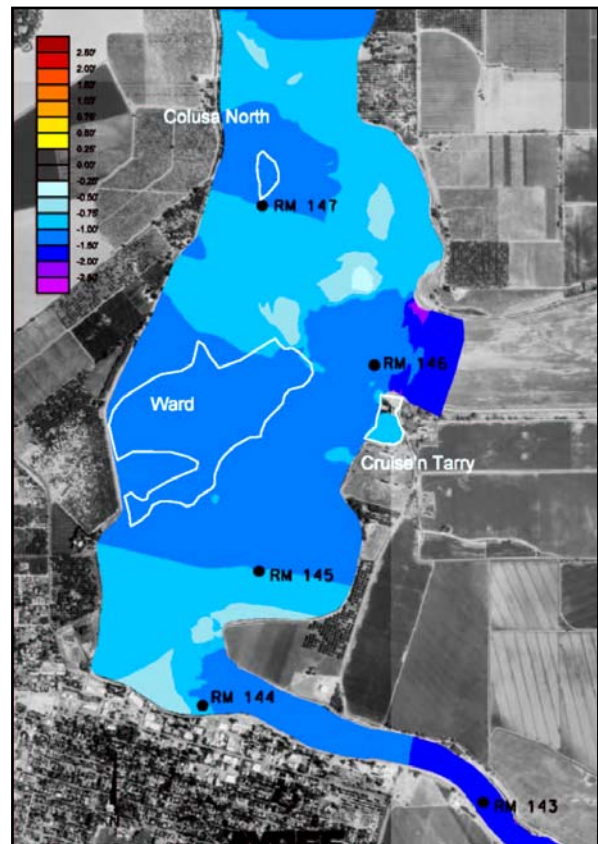
The initial results of the hydraulic modeling were presented at a public information meeting on November 15, 2007. The entire report is available to any interested party as noted below.

CSP REPORTS AND INFORMATION

Colusa Subreach Planning reports are available for review at the public libraries in Colusa, Princeton, and Willows. They are also available online at www.sacramentoriver.org/SRCAF. Hard copies are available from the CSP project manager, Gregg Werner at 530-897-6370 x216 or g Werner@tnc.org

Available documents include:

- Colusa Subreach Hydraulic Analysis Report
- Colusa-Sacramento River State Recreation Area Master Plan
- Colusa Subreach Recreation Access Plan
- Fiscal and Economics Effects Analysis
- Restoration Tract Baseline Assessments
- Pest and Regulatory Effects Study
- Colusa Subreach Background Report



Graphic showing the flood level near Colusa to be 1 to 1.5 feet below the 1957 standard

STREAMLINED ESA COMPLIANCE FOR LANDOWNERS

The Sacramento River Conservation Area Forum (SRCAF) is nearing completion of a Programmatic Safe Harbor Agreement / Voluntary Local Program, which can minimize the effects of the State and Federal Endangered Species Acts on landowners along the Sacramento River. The program offers landowners freedom from restrictions related to additional threatened and endangered species and elderberry plants on their property.

Levee maintenance agencies can also gain the ability to remove elderberry plants without offsetting mitigation, saving substantial time and money. This will allow these agencies to take advantage of the increased habitat on new restoration sites and to "take" endangered species as long as the overall baseline of these listed species is not diminished. This streamlining can eliminate delays that have affected flood maintenance projects in the past.

SRCAF has worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Game to implement their new standards that allow landowners unprecedented flexibility in dealing with endangered species on their land. This benefit may often be accomplished without cost to the landowner and without State or Federal agencies coming onto their property. SRCAF will be holding public meetings to finalize wording of the document this spring. Interested landowners should contact Beverley Anderson-Abbs or Josh Brown at SRCAF by calling (530) 528-7435.

PEST AND REGULATORY EFFECTS STUDY HAS NEW INFORMATION

The recently completed Pest and Regulatory Effects Study has provided a wealth of new information about how habitat restoration projects interact with neighboring crop lands. It has also identified ways to resolve potential problems. The project brought farmers and agricultural advisors together with researchers from EDAW Inc. to answer two of the key questions asked by Subreach landowners, "What kind of regulatory changes can happen?" and "What kind of pest impacts can occur if wildlife habitat is restored next to my crops?"

The Study concluded that a change in regulations could occur only if elderberry plants are planted or become established on the wildlife restoration sites. Other regulatory limitations related to pesticides, water quality, and endangered species will not change. The Study also identified several options to mitigate any elderberry-related effects.

The pest assessment focused on 25 potential pests that were identified by local agricultural experts. These included rodents, deer, birds, insects, and disease pests. The potential for negative effects on the different types of crops raised along the river was evaluated with input from local farmers and farm advisors.

The report that details the findings and recommendations of the Study is available to any interested party.

COLUSA BOAT RAMP PROJECT MOVING FORWARD

The City of Colusa is moving forward on a new boat ramp that will not have the sedimentation problems that have plagued the existing ramp. The City and the State Department of Parks and Recreation recently executed a management agreement for the facility. The agreement provides that the City will manage construction of the new boat ramp and State Parks will then operate the facility as part of the Colusa-Sacramento River State Recreation Area. The City has requested that the State Department of Boating and Waterways release funding for the project design and construction of the facility will follow the design. The State funding process has not been quick as most people would like but the positive news is that the new boat ramp is steadily moving towards reality.

RESTORATION PLANNING IS INCLUDING THE NEIGHBORS

Wildlife habitat restoration is being planned for eight potential sites in the Colusa Subreach with the input of neighboring landowners. These possible restoration sites include the following:

- Womble – 54 acres, E side, 2 mi. SE of Princeton
- Jensen – 81 acres, E side, 2.5 mi. SE of Princeton
- Stegeman – 8 acres, W side, 4 mi. S of Princeton
- 1000-acre - 49 acres, W side, 4 mi. S of Princeton
- Boeger – 51 acres, E side, 3 mi. N of Colusa
- Colusa-North – 5 acres, W side, 2.5 mi. N of Colusa
- Ward – 139 acres, W side, 2 mi. N of Colusa
- Cruise n'Tarry – 3 acres, E side, .5 mi. N of Colusa

Habitat planners from The Nature Conservancy are meeting with neighboring landowners to discuss the type of vegetation that is proposed and how it can be configured to be most compatible with adjacent crop land. These meetings include review of hydraulic modeling results and discussions of buffers and other adjustments to fit each individual situation. Only about 11% of the boundary of the restoration areas abuts crop land.

Colusa Subreach Planning was designed to include all known, potential restoration sites in the Colusa Subreach so that cumulative effects could be considered. A decision as to which of the eight sites should be restored to native vegetation is expected this summer.

FINAL COLUSA SUBREACH SURVEY UNDERWAY

Landowners in the Colusa Subreach are being asked their opinions about habitat restoration and the Colusa Subreach Planning process as part of a survey being conducted by the Institute for Social Research at CSU Sacramento. This is a follow-up to the initial survey that was taken at the beginning of the planning process in 2005. It will provide important input to help direct future conservation planning efforts along the River. Survey results will be available in June.

Questions and Comments about Colusa Subreach Planning?

Please contact:

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