



FloodSAFE CALIFORNIA

“Listening to Farmers about Floodway Conservation!”

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Agriculture (AG) Stakeholders Recommendations for Integrated Flood Management

This poster summarizes the interviews conducted in January 2012



Yuba County Almonds

Central Valley Flood Protection Act of 2008:

Provides several specific objectives that require the Central Valley Flood Protection Plan (CVFPP) to achieve the following environmental objectives:

1. Promote natural dynamic hydrologic & geomorphic processes
2. Increase quality, diversity & connectivity of aquatic habitats
3. Minimize flood management system - O&M requirements
4. Promote recovery of native species populations & overall biotic diversity

Central Valley Flood Protection Plan Multiple Benefits:

1. Improved **public safety** from catastrophic flooding is always number one.
2. A more sustainable & resilient flood management system, capable of
 - a) Long-term adaptability to changing hydrological & climatic conditions
 - b) Provide greater long-term viability for ecosystems & agriculture
3. Faster delivery of flood risk reduction projects
4. More efficient & effective environmental permitting

Central Valley Flood System Conservation Strategy

1. This is an additional phase of integrated planning, based on the Conservation Framework, being developed over the next five years.
2. The **Conservation Strategy** is a comprehensive and long term guide to **protect people and wildlife** simultaneously in the face of flood risks.
3. The Conservation Strategy may include regional permitting plans (Natural Community Conservation Plans, Habitat Conservation Plans, or programmatic Section 7's).
4. DWR recognizes the important role of agriculture in integrated flood management, particularly in the Central Valley.
5. As part of developing the Conservation Strategy, DWR has reached out to the agricultural community to listen to their ideas, proposals, & concerns regarding flood control and resource management.



Great or Common Egret (*Ardea alba*) Sutter County rice fields



Butte County Wetlands Restoration, USDA NRCS 2000

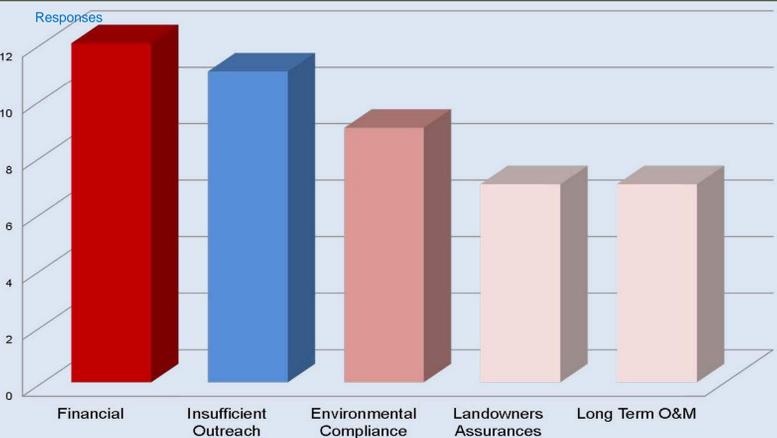
Why Conduct Agricultural Interviews?

Most of the CVFPP is in rural agricultural communities whose participation is critical in the planning & implementation of the Conservation Strategy. The AG interviews were done to develop a dialogue with these agricultural communities; to listen to their ideas, proposals, & concerns regarding flood control planning. The interviewees are most familiar with the mindset of the rural communities they represent & it is important their voices be heard. The most innovative ideas on how to implement a local multi-benefit (improved flood control & ecosystem restoration) flood control effort often originate from the people who live closest to

the issues. Local farmers should be equal partners in the development, implementation, & operations & maintenance of multi-benefit flood control projects, so their input is vital. The individuals interviewed for this report represented a broad range of agricultural interests & a much broader number of people from their organizations & interest. We estimate that the interested stakeholder opinions represented an agricultural community input of perhaps 10,000 people.

Four recommended themes were developed to effectively move forward with the future implementation of the Conservation Strategy. Below are the key recommendations:

Challenges Facing Implementation of Multi-benefit Flood Control Projects Based on Stakeholder Responses



AG land during flood near Sutter Buttes

1. Keep Farmers Engaged

- Outreach should be synchronized **early** with the initial development of any plans.
- Utilize **existing** AG organizations with established contacts & credibility with the private landowners.
- Work with **local** organizations at local meeting & use their media to convey information.
- Tailor information to the rural landowner interests, their needs, & their capacity.
- **Face to face** outreach to develop trust & improve relationships with the local stakeholders.

2. Improve Funding Approaches

- Increasing AG land & crop values thus less land available for habitat restorations.
- Cancellation of Federal Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program is increasing.
- **More incentives** to landowners to motivate them to participate in any future projects.
- **Compensation** for landowners to restore and do habitat maintenance.
- Reduce government funding paperwork & “government strings attached” to funds.
- Provide **tax benefits** for those who participate.
- Guarantee **long term funding** to compensate landowners.
- Leverage DWR funding with other funding sources.
- Local government lost revenue compensation for removing land from property tax roll.

3. Help Farmers to Help Wildlife

- Inform & technical assistance needed on how to create and maintain restored habitat.
- Utilize a **local entity** to oversee all permit compliance.
- Landowners allowed to restoring their own land with agreed upon options.
- Exempt cooperatives landowner from **third party liability** to neighboring landowners.
- Regulatory agencies coordination for a consistent approach to environmental laws.
- Habitat projects should provide **local mitigation credits**, not system wide credits
- Follow Resource Conservation Districts Partners in Restoration (PIR) program lead to develop programmatic permits for projects by working with regulatory agencies to fast track the implementation of restoration projects.

4. Other Ways to Engage Farmers

- Use **willing landholders** oxbows for habitat restoration work with compensation.
- Lease private AG land for restoration habitat and use rotate with AG uses in area.
- Improve **public access** & recreational opportunities to restored habitat.
- Encouraging the creation of “**farm plans**”.
- Stop levee erosion on the water side by developing vegetation aprons.
- Use **successful project models** for developing productive relationships between landowners & agencies.



Yolo County Restoration



Rice Fields, Sutter County



Yolo Bypass



Walnut grove flooding, Yuba County

Next Steps

1. This information will provide the foundation for future engagement efforts between DWR staff & the agricultural community.
2. FESSRO has a better understanding of exactly what challenges are important first steps in developing a strategy to address them.
3. DWR will continue towards addressing a common complaint among the stakeholders, “DWR does little to no outreach with the agricultural community.”
4. Demonstrate to AG community that DWR will act upon the advice provided by the stakeholders & treat them as a partner in the overall Conservation Strategy process.