



Fish Restoration Program Agreement

Stakeholder Assessment Summary

To Inform Implementation of the Fish Restoration Program

A joint program between the California Department of Water Resources and
California Department of Fish and Wildlife



Cover: Prospect Island, Sacramento River Deep Water Ship Channel, and Liberty Island (Photo Credit: Dale Kolke)

Stakeholder Assessment Summary

*to inform implementation of the
California Department of Water Resources &
California Department of Fish & Wildlife's*

Fish Restoration Program Agreement

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To the reader:

The intent of this Stakeholder Assessment Summary is to document the range of stakeholder views and perspectives on the Fish Restoration Program Agreement (FRPA). This summary represents a characterization of stakeholder understandings of the program and views and concerns related to program implementation.

The summary reflects the views – accurate or inaccurate – as shared by the stakeholder interviewees themselves. The statements in this summary may or may not reflect the FRPA program.

For more information about FRPA and its implementation process, please visit the [FRPA website](#).

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) and California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW, formerly California Department of Fish & Game, or DFG) referred to collectively as the Implementing Agencies, are signatories to the 2010 Fish Restoration Program Agreement (FRPA). The Agreement describes how DWR and CDFW will work cooperatively to implement specific fish habitat restoration requirements in the Delta and Suisun Marsh under Biological Opinions (BiOps) by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS 2009) and US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS 2008) as well as the CDFW (2008) Incidental Take Permit (ITP) for continued State Water Project (SWP) and Central Valley Project (CVP) operations. FRPA is focused on restoring 8,000 acres of intertidal and associated subtidal habitat in the Delta and Suisun Marsh to benefit delta smelt, 800 acres of low salinity habitat to benefit longfin smelt and a number of related actions for salmonids in the Yolo Bypass.

Purpose

As part of broader efforts to implement FRPA, Kearns & West (K&W) conducted confidential interviews with a variety of Delta and Suisun Marsh stakeholders. The purpose of the interviews was to learn more about stakeholder interests, issues, and concerns about the FRPA program and to use this information to inform the development of an effective communication and engagement strategy. Interviewees were selected because of their extensive knowledge of and involvement in Delta issues, and their interest in habitat restoration in the Delta and Suisun Marsh. In all, 25 stakeholders were interviewed from 23 organizations. Perspectives represented by the interviewees included: landowner, local government, flood control, state agencies, habitat restoration, agricultural, recreation, water quality, and public health.

This stakeholder assessment synthesizes the results of stakeholder interviews and highlights common themes and key issues expressed regarding FRPA implementation. It provides the perspectives of various stakeholders that may be affected by FRPA actions or who can provide specific technical and local support through the implementation of FRPA. K&W will draw from these findings to inform development of a Communications and Engagement Plan (C&E Plan) to guide stakeholder and public involvement in the FRPA implementation process.

Key Findings

Interviewees reflected that the Implementing Agencies have an important opportunity to proactively engage local governments and stakeholders in implementing what is widely considered to be an opportunity for a positive and efficient restoration process. As such, interviewees encouraged the Implementing Agencies to take steps to coordinate with existing local land use plans and restoration efforts.

Interviewees described a wide variety of interests and concerns about fish habitat restoration in the Delta and Suisun Marsh. Among these were water quality (e.g., impacting water supplies and deliveries), flood management, methylmercury issues from moving sediment, impacts on agriculture and conversion of agricultural land, impacts on local tax base and on local land use planning, and unintended service impacts and maintenance costs on local governments (e.g., policing).

Many respondents expressed general uncertainty about success of restoration projects and about the science supporting restoration activities. They encouraged FRPA to use sound science but believed there was a lack of good data demonstrating biological or ecosystem outcomes from prior restoration projects.

“Keys to FRPA Program Success”

In general, interviewees consistently stated that FRPA’s success depends on the communication, partnership, and commitment with affected stakeholders, landowners, and local governments. Interviewees recommended five keys to successfully achieve the FRPA program goals:

1. Communicate clearly about FRPA – in particular, its objectives, commitment to local involvement and public transparency, intention to be a willing seller process and commitment to long-term stewardship of the land.
2. Develop early and productive partnerships with potentially affected local residents and governments, recognizing locals’ on-the-ground knowledge and pursuing win-win strategies. Show willingness to listen, compromise and joint problem solve with locals.
3. Engage in landscape-scale restoration that identifies objectives and technical restoration criteria and that considers habitat and ecological connectivity as well as ecological value of properties.
4. Establish that FRPA is a willing seller process early on. Engage with landowners to identify restoration projects in a “bottom-up” approach that stimulates local landowner participation and encourages landowners to engage with the State in property selection. Interviewees recommended that the State purchase properties for restoration based on a collaborative and local selection process.
5. Create a model for successful ecosystem restoration in the Delta with a phased yet constantly forward-moving process. Demonstrating success early on will provide momentum to restore remaining areas in the long run.

2. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This stakeholder assessment summary contains key findings and process recommendations from stakeholder interviews conducted between September and December 2012. The interviews were conducted by phone or in-person and typically lasted 30-60 minutes. Twenty-five interviewees from organizations were selected for their diverse perspectives, interests, and background relative to FRPA. The purpose of this stakeholder assessment was to learn more about stakeholder interests, issues and concerns regarding FRPA implementation and to identify potential keys to success. This stakeholder assessment informs a FRPA Communications and Engagement Plan that will guide stakeholder and public involvement in the FRPA implementation process.

The stakeholder interviewees shared their interests in the Delta and restoration of habitat located within the Delta for fish populations. These interests were reliably tied to their organization’s missions and, taken together, reflect the range of interests of potentially impacted stakeholders in the Delta. Representatives from the following organization were interviewed as part of this assessment.

1. American Rivers (phone)
2. Bay Delta Conservation Plan (in person)
3. Delta Conservancy (in person)

4. Delta Counties Coalition (phone)
5. Delta Stewardship Council – Delta Plan (in person)
6. Ducks Unlimited (phone)
7. Local landowners and technical advisors (phone)
8. North Delta Water Agency (phone)
9. Planning and Conservation League
10. Reclamation District 501 (Ryer Island) (phone)
11. Reclamation District 999 (Clarksburg) (phone)
12. Reclamation District 2068 (Solano County) (in person)
13. Sacramento and Yolo Mosquito & Vector Control District (phone)
14. Solano County (phone)
15. Solano County Water Agency/HCP (phone)
16. Suisun Resource Conservation District (phone)
17. The Bay Institute (phone)
18. The Nature Conservancy (phone)
19. UC Berkeley (phone)
20. Yolo Bypass Working Group (phone)
21. Yolo County (phone)
22. Yolo County Farm Bureau (phone)

The interview questions are listed in Appendix A, and a list of interviewees is contained in Appendix B.

3. STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW FINDINGS

3.1. Understanding of FRPA

3.1.1. Interviewee Understanding of FRPA

Interviewees were asked: *What is your understanding of the basic FRPA program purpose and activities?*

Most respondents indicated that they were generally aware of the FRPA and its purpose, but not familiar with implementation specifics. For example, most interviewees understand that FRPA exists to implement the mitigation measures in the Biological Opinions (BiOps) and satisfy the acreage requirements, but were uncertain of how the Implementing Agencies would implement the necessary actions or operational tasks.

A small portion of interview respondents had never heard of FRPA prior to the informational interview invitation that Dennis McEwan (DWR, FRPA Program Lead) emailed to potential interviewees. One interviewee indicated that the program has been “below the radar.” As such, many interviewees expressed a desire for the FRPA Implementing Agencies to present the Implementation Strategy to various entities and interested stakeholders in the project area.

Some interviewees expressed the view that the Implementing Agencies have not been proactive or effective in describing the program to stakeholders and explaining how it relates to other Delta restoration efforts. As such, interviewees shared that they were unclear about certain topics or implementation aspects, including:

- The difference between restoration programs (especially tidal marsh restoration projects) in the Delta area and whether restoration for other projects counts toward FRPA
- How the ITP fits in with the BiOps
- US Bureau of Reclamation's (USBR) responsibility relative to FRPA in the Yolo Bypass. Respondents noted that USBR's obligation to restore 20,000 acres for salmonids is not reflected in FRPA, and some interviewees wondered how FRPA affects USBR's operations of the pumps
- How the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) and FRPA will interact
- How the CDFW permits fit into FRPA
- How FRPA will interact with local agencies
- Potential overlap with restoration credits that other Delta programs would receive for restoration
- How the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) will be involved
- The role of the State and Federal Contractors Water Agency (SFCWA) within FRPA

3.1.2. Peers' Understanding of FRPA

Interviewees were asked: *How well do you believe your peers and other stakeholders understand the FRPA program?*

Most interviewees indicated that there is a very limited awareness and understanding among community members about FRPA. Interviewees indicated that most peers who are professionally involved in Delta issues and restoration activities – including agency or governmental staff, landowners, and/or potentially impacted parties – have a general knowledge that DWR and CDFW are obligated to implement the requirements of the BiOps and the ITP and that there are actions that will occur before BDCP is completed, but might not know that FRPA is the program that will implement habitat restoration required by requirements of the BiOps and ITP. However, interviewees believe that most other stakeholders who are not professionally involved either do not know that FRPA exists or are just vaguely aware.

Interviewees indicated that most stakeholders, if aware of FRPA, are confused about the difference between FRPA and BDCP and that the broad public might not distinguish between the two (especially Reclamation Districts, who are impacted by both). Some see FRPA as existing to support BDCP or as serving as a “building block” or “initial phase” of BDCP. Others don't understand that if BDCP “goes away,” FRPA still requires implementation. Or, they view any success implementing FRPA as also helping BDCP, which may lead them to oppose FRPA.

3.2. Issues and Concerns Related to Potential Restoration Locations

Interviewees were asked: *What are your key concerns or anticipated challenges that could arise in connection with restoration in general or at specific locations?*

Because this stakeholder interview process welcomed perspectives from various different stakeholder entities (public health, local government, landowners, flood and levee interests, agricultural interests, etc.), there was a wide range of general concerns expressed about FRPA in general and potential restoration locations in particular. As such, the perspectives have been separated into categories. Key concerns expressed by interviewees are captured below.

3.2.1. General Concerns

Restoration Property Acquisition

- Interviewees were generally concerned about how land will be acquired. They recommended that the Implementing Agencies clearly communicate to the public that FRPA is a willing seller and community-oriented process and that the State is finding solutions to manage properties, minimize detrimental impacts to neighbors and improve property values.
- Interviewees generally indicated that although landowners realize that the Implementing Agencies have power of condemnation, exercising eminent domain should be avoided at all costs. Interviewees consistently emphasized that property owners fear eminent domain and condemnation of private property because they believe restoration could decrease property values, and could change the usage of the land. Interviewees were wary of government playing a heavy hand with property rights.
- Interviewees were of the general opinion that if the State proves to be a good land manager, it could more easily find willing sellers.
- Some of the interviewees recommended that FRPA identify specific habitat targets in each of the counties in order to reduce speculation about property selection.
- Many interviewees asked for more information about the potential land areas being considered within Suisun Marsh, Prospect Island, Cache Slough and Yolo Bypass

Long-term Stewardship

- Some interviewees expressed that landowners may not want to sell property to the State if they don't believe that the State will manage the lands well.
- Some interviewees expressed concern about the funding available for long-term property management and maintenance, as well as the potential economic burden of landowners taking on property management.
- A few interviewees asked that the Implementing Agencies pay local government assessment fees for long-term property management in case private land is converted into habitat.
- A few interviewees asked that the Implementing Agencies seek no net loss of waterfowl habitat or loss of recreational opportunities.
- One interviewee asked that vegetation Best Management Practices be in place prior to implementing new restoration projects.

Water Quality and Supply

- Several interviewees expressed concern about potential impacts on water quality and the potential for restrictions to water deliveries due to higher potential incidence of take, and asked that these issues be evaluated.
- Many interviewees raised concerns that potential restoration activities might result in significant changes in river flows, areas of new inundation and changes to flood control regimes.
- Many interviewees indicated that discharging water into the Deepwater Ship Channel would create negative consequences in terms of erosion and salinity levels in the channel. Some of these interviewees suggested ensuring the presence of shaded vegetation and habitat along both sides of the channel because tidal and ship movement damage levees.

Agricultural Resources

- Many interviewees, especially agricultural, local landowner, and governmental interests, expressed concern about the loss of prime farmland. They asked that the Implementing Agencies seek to prevent the conversion of agricultural land and loss of foraging habitat for animals, and consider the impacts to agricultural businesses, tax revenue, livelihoods, and adjacent property owners.
- One interviewee expressed concern about whether water needed for restoration will be taken from agricultural purposes, whether increased flow through canals and channels will cause erosion and whether levees will be set back.
- A few interviewees asked that restoration be planned in accordance with seasonal wetland restoration and cattle grazing.

Public Health

- Public health-focused interviewees indicated that consideration should be paid to whether the restoration areas are located close to population centers, due to the possibility of creating potential mosquito habitat. Restoration system design should include Best Management Practices for mosquito vector control.

Restoration Design Process

- Several interviewees noted that stakeholders would like to collaborate with the Implementing Agencies on determining restoration criteria and would like to know who will be involved in designing the restoration plan and how.
- Some interviewees expressed concern that near-term actions at Prospect Island, Dutch Slough and McCormack Williamson tract have been delayed in the past and that DWR and CDFW should develop priorities and focus on completing priority projects. These interviewees encouraged Implementing Agencies to streamline the planning process to move more quickly into implementation. They also indicated that the permitting required for each individual project is significant, and Implementing Agencies should consider how to consolidate permitting without compromising restoration planning.

Fisheries Management

- Restoration efforts should focus not only on increasing species abundance and growth rates, but also on restoring historic and geographic range of species to increase population resiliency.
- There was a concern that modifications are made to turn terrestrial habitat into fisheries habitat, other species may be adversely affected (e.g., reduced habitats for over-wintering waterfowl or other habitat uses by terrestrial species).

3.2.2. Prospect Island

In addition to general comments on FRPA, respondents were asked to provide specific feedback on each of the identified potential restoration locations. The feedback below pertains specifically to Prospect Island.

Many of the interviewees expressed that restoring Prospect Island could be an “early win” and generally viewed Prospect Island as a good potential restoration site since it has limited agricultural resources.

Impacts on Adjacent Landowners

- The most common concern expressed about Prospect Island was that restoration there could increase hydraulic head locally and subsequently cause seepage under the Ryer Island levee and affect the strength and stability of the levee system. Some of these interviewees stated that this is a very sensitive issue for landowners on Ryer Island and pointed out that many locals generally believe that seepage issues have coincided with flooding on Prospect Island, although some of these interviewees also know that studies are currently underway. These interviewees recommended that the Implementing Agencies take steps to preserve levee stabilization on Prospect Island and maintain current land uses.
- One interviewee expressed that the duck ponds on Ryer Island might complicate seepage studies.
- Some interviewees suggested that DWR measure baseline seepage and the long-term integrity of dry levees prior to restoration.
- Some interviewees also suggested coordinating with Reclamation Districts around the projects to prevent breaching.
- A few interviewees expressed concern about the potential burden from the introduction of endangered species at Prospect Island and related loss in operations.
- Several of the interviewees mentioned that there is a single landowner on Prospect Island (the Stringer property) from whom access will be necessary, and that this should be taken into account. These interviewees questioned whether restoration could occur without purchasing this individual's land or if securing this land will delay implementation of other restoration projects.
- Many of the interviewees expressed concern about squatting and vandalism issues at Prospect Island.

Design Considerations

- A small portion of interviewees noted that there is significant land around Prospect Island and from a hydrodynamics perspective there may be insufficient tidal energy needed for restoration. Tidal energy fluctuations could impact upstream areas.
- A few interviewees also expressed concern about whether subtidal habitat is suitable to harbor endangered species, and whether enough wave and windy habitat exists. Sequencing and design of individual restoration projects need to be understood in terms of consequences like sea level rise. These interviewees noted that if water surface elevations change, this may impact local landowner intakes and should be addressed with mitigation.
- In terms of agency coordination and design, some interviewees suggested including design connectivity between the Deepwater Ship Channel at the northwest end of the island and potentially involving USACE, although some interviewees questioned USACE's ability to manage or partner on restoration projects.
- Since Prospect Island is at the bottom of the bypass, many interviewees expressed concern about flood control and increasing cost-sharing obligations from Reclamation Districts as a result. These interviewees noted that they would like more frequent information on flood control and other potential risks.
- A few interviewees wondered why Prospect Island was chosen over Liberty Island; in their view, Prospect Island does not have the same connectivity with Yolo Bypass as Liberty Island, and its habitat values are questionable.

Impacts on Other Species

- Some interviewees expressed concern about the potential negative impacts to native species due to Prospect Island restoration and the potential to create habitat favorable to invasive species. Species that are believed to benefit from Prospect Island restoration are temperature-sensitive near the temperatures that already exist in Northern Delta.

3.2.3. Cache Slough Complex

Interviewees offered concerns and considerations relative to potential restoration specific to the Cache Slough Complex. In general, interviewees expressed that the Cache Slough Complex shares many of Prospect Island's issues, but interviewees indicated that it is a good area on which to focus and offers opportunities to use public lands. Interviewees noted that Cache Slough has long been identified as an area of biological and ecological importance but is constrained by the process required to breach levees.

Impacts on Local Interests

- Many interviewees expressed concern about potential impacts to agricultural resources, especially in terms of introducing protected species in habitat adjacent to farmland. One stakeholder asked that diversified agricultural land be omitted from potential restoration areas (but include pasture land); removing agricultural land from production impacts property taxes and county services, and agricultural mitigation could be an issue.
- One interviewee stated that if a Reclamation District's property were used for restoration, these costs would be transferred onto remaining participants.
- One interviewee noted that Solano County is currently conducting a study of the Cache Slough area and related impacts on agricultural resources.

Stakeholder Coordination

- Some stakeholders expressed that there is not currently a stakeholder coordination group for Cache Slough (as there is with Yolo Bypass) and indicated that this might be an unmet need.

Other Impacts

- Interviewees listed key potential impacts in the Cache Slough Complex that might arise from restoration, including impacts to water salinity and other elements of water quality, water access/supply, tidal changes, water rights, agricultural intakes, potential flooding, fish stranding due to levee breaches and impacts to federal levees and timing. They asked that these impacts be studied.
- A concern was noted about the North Bay aqueduct intake and the associated take authorization or permission needed to screen diversions at the expense of a restoration project.

3.2.4. Yolo Bypass

Interviewees offered concerns and considerations relative to potential restoration within the Yolo Bypass. Below is a summary of these comments.

Design Considerations

- Some interviewees expressed that the Yolo Bypass is a viable option for restoration because it does not have much agricultural land, but attention needs to be paid to existing flow easements. In light of the flow easements, it was suggested that restoration might be better directed at Suisun Marsh to avoid negative impacts on flood control and neighboring properties.
- It was noted that Yolo Bypass might be a viable potential restoration site because it could export food produced on the floodplain into the pelagic zone, but this concept requires more testing.
- It was indicated that planning should take into account the Yolo Bypass's various managed uses (education, drainage, wildlife, farming, flood control migratory waterfowl).

Flood Management

- Several interviewees stated that alterations to Yolo Bypass might impact flood control for Solano County and other areas, as the Bypass was created for flood management purposes. These interviewees expressed that Yolo Bypass provides more challenges from a flood control perspective because it acts as the major workhorse facility in the entire flood control system, but that restoration could be feasible as long as the water table and flood flow capacity are maintained.
- Some interviewees said that depending on the restoration area, there could be seepage concerns and potential hydrologic impacts at the Yolo Bypass, but slowing down floodwaters through the Bypass might provide for more water management opportunities.

Impacts on Other Species

- Several interviewees noted that modifying the Fremont Weir has the potential to significantly impact waterfowl habitat and use. A few shared that locals would be more receptive to a “multi-benefits” discussion that explores the value/benefit tradeoff discussion between species restoration and waterfowl. DWR should consider alternative ways of providing fish habitat benefits by utilizing the existing landscape.

3.2.5. Suisun Marsh

Interviewees offered concerns and considerations specific to potential restoration at Suisun Marsh.

Design Considerations

- Many interviewees noted that Suisun Marsh might be a prime location for tidal wetlands restoration due to strong existing tides. One respondent expressed the possibility of using wetlands to retain floodwaters and reduce impacts from flooding on agricultural or residential areas, which could mitigate impacts to managed seasonal wetlands.
- It was noted that due to the Montezuma Slough Control Structure, dendritic channels were sealed off from the fisheries in Suisun Bay, which had adverse results. It was suggested that the control structures be decommissioned and historical seasonal flows be recreated.
- Many of the stakeholder interviewees expressed concern about the restoration viability and ability to maintain productivity in the estuary due to the impact that state and federal water projects have on Suisun Marsh. These respondents noted that water quality modifications in Suisun Marsh could significantly impact other locations.

Coordination with Other Plans

- Many interviewees expressed that potential FRPA-related restoration at Suisun Marsh should be conducted in coordination with the Suisun Marsh Habitat Management, Preservation and Restoration Plan, which calls for no significant impact to waterfowl and to functions and values of managed seasonal wetlands.
- Several stakeholders pointed out that restoration within Suisun Marsh should be consistent with the Delta Plan, and some of these asked for a mechanism to quantify how to offset potential net losses to recreation in Suisun Marsh.

Impacts to Other Species

- The primary concern expressed by interviewees with regard to Suisun Marsh involved potential impacts to duck hunting, although interviewees expressed that waterfowl hunters are typically willing to collaborate with the State. It was noted that Suisun Marsh restoration planners have credibility with duck clubs and Suisun stakeholders.

3.3. Recommendations on Outreach, Coordination and Engagement Approach

3.3.1. Best Practices for Soliciting Stakeholder Input on FRPA Implementation

Interviewees were asked: *What is the best way to inform stakeholders about FRPA, in order to get their input on potential restoration planning in the Delta and Suisun Marsh?*

The stakeholders interviewed have collectively engaged in a wide variety of stakeholder involvement efforts in the Delta, and they provided a range of ideas for effectively and efficiently involving interested stakeholders and the public in FRPA implementation. In general, the interviewees expressed appreciation for this interview process as a positive sign that DWR is committed to more meaningful public engagement.

Expectation Setting

In terms of setting expectations, the interviewees generally indicated that the FRPA Implementing Agencies need to consistently and clearly indicate the focus and limitations of the FRPA program.

General Process Recommendations

In terms of general process, all of the interviewees encouraged the Implementing Agencies to give the public a participatory role in deciding criteria and implementation actions. They emphasized that early efforts to inform stakeholders and the public, establish communication channels and solicit input are essential to the program's long-term success. Although they asked that stakeholders be part of the process from the beginning, they also acknowledged that the most substantive discussions would come when the Implementing Agencies begin proposing specific projects. Individuals and groups tend to get involved when they are directly affected by a project, so the interviewees recommended that the Implementing Agencies pursue "geographic-specific" outreach centered on particular projects.

Interviewees generally asked for an “engaging and substantive” public brainstorming phase at the beginning of the process followed by a deliberative process to select properties and restoration actions.

Engagement Process Recommendations

Interviewees suggested various specific engagement processes by which the State could solicit public input in designing restoration efforts that would also have the effect of promoting community acceptance and involvement and building trust with affected parties. Suggestions included: conducting briefings with local governments and potentially affected parties, using design “charrettes” (conceptual brainstorming), site tours and field meetings, and periodic information sharing and gathering forums. Interviewees also indicated that targeted stakeholder meetings would be more effective than general meetings.

Many of the interviewees noted that Delta stakeholders in general are already “overcommitted” to the many existing Delta-related public involvement processes. Therefore, these individuals suggested that, when possible, FRPA outreach be integrated into existing stakeholder groups and outreach processes (see Section 3.3.3.). The interviewees generally believed that coordinating and communicating with local citizens and counties, and offering a degree of input into decision-making, are critical to program success.

Interviewees overwhelmingly encouraged the Implementing Agencies to be proactive in involving affected landowners in particular and discussing potential additional impacts from restoration with them so that they have a stake in restoration and can help the restoration program accomplish its intended results. In addition, interviewees also suggested that, in order to engage busy locals at critical points in the program, phone calls or in-person involvement be used instead of email (although frequent but concise email communication was suggested as a good communication tool).

3.3.2. Key Interests to Engage

Interviewees were asked: *Who are the major interests or stakeholders (e.g., landowners, local governments, other Delta programs, etc.) potentially impacted by FRPA that should be consulted?*

Interviewees suggested a wide variety of entities – both individuals and groups – that offer valuable perspectives that would aid in not only planning, but also information dissemination among their professional and personal circles. Below is a list of these suggested entities. Many of these entities have been reached out to as part of this stakeholder interview process (indicated in bold).

Of particular note, many interviewees placed importance on involving local agencies and governments that oversee potential restoration sites at the beginning and throughout the process. These respondents reflected that local level outreach is more important than state-level outreach, and that State elected officials often look to have local elected officials involved first.

Local Agencies/Entities/Governments

- Cities of Fairfield, Suisun City, Rio Vista, Vacaville, Dixon
- Central Delta Water Agency

- **Delta Counties Coalition**
- Dixon Resource Conservation District
- Maine Prairie Water District
- **Mosquito abatement districts**
- **North Delta Water Agency**
- Reclamation Districts (notably **501, 999, 2068, 349**)
- **Solano County**
- **Solano County Farm Bureau**
- Solano Irrigation District
- Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
- South Delta Water Agency
- **Suisun Resource Conservation District**
- **Yolo County**
- **Yolo County Farm Bureau**

State Agencies/Entities

- **Bay Delta Conservation Plan**
- Central Valley Flood Management Planning Program
- Central Valley Flood Protection Board
- **Delta Conservancy**
- Delta Protection Commission
- **Delta Stewardship Council**
- San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission
- State Water Resource Control Board
- Yolo Natural Heritage Program

Elected Officials

- Solano County Board of Supervisors
- Yolo County Board of Supervisors
- State Senator (Lois Wolk)
- State Assemblymember (Mariko Yamada)
- Other Delta elected officials

Nonprofit Organizations

- **American Rivers**
- California Waterfowl Association
- Discover the Delta Foundation
- **Ducks Unlimited**
- North Delta C.A.R.E.S.
- North Delta Conservancy
- NRDC
- Restore the Delta
- **The Bay Institute**
- **The Nature Conservancy**
- **Yolo Basin Foundation**

Others/General

- **Agriculture and farming interests, including farm bureaus**
- Conway Ranch
- Flood control agencies
- **Individual property owners**, including Ryer Island landowners
- Recreation interests
- Regulatory agencies
- Researchers conducting work in the area

3.3.3. Coordination with Existing Delta Processes

Interviewees were asked: *Are there existing outreach or technical processes that you are aware of with which the FRPA program should be working in order to best involve your or other organizations (e.g., particular meetings or meeting times, technical work groups, stakeholder groups, forums, existing channels or other processes)?*

All of the stakeholders interviewed for this process have a considerable amount of experience in the program area, as well as associations with other technical and outreach processes. The interviewees were in fact selected in part because of their ties to other planning and public involvement processes and ability to provide insight on how FRPA could maximize its outreach efforts by coordinating with existing Delta processes. Interviewees provided the following guidance on how best to coordinate with other Delta engagement processes.

Make Efficient Use of Existing Delta Engagement Venues

Interviewees indicated that coordination with existing Delta processes will allow FRPA staff to capture stakeholder input without requesting additional meeting times. Many interviewees cautioned about “meeting fatigue” and asked that the number of new meetings be limited. It was also noted that many stakeholders are occupied during the growing season, so meetings should be kept to a minimum during those times. In instances when FRPA wishes simply to inform stakeholders and receive general feedback, utilizing existing channels of stakeholder communication is efficient and allows FRPA to capture audiences through existing processes.

Many interviewees recommended collaborating with the Yolo Bypass stakeholder venues (such as Lower Yolo Bypass Planning Forum, Yolo Bypass Working Group and Yolo Bypass Fisheries Enhancement Planning Team) to best understand the Bypass’s unique land management and flood easement situation.

Ensure that Existing Delta Processes Match the Desired Outreach Objectives

Interviewees also expressed that consideration should be given to the purpose and objectives of each process and meeting prior to combining efforts. Most importantly, it was noted that presentation and information-gathering sessions that are part of larger Delta coordination processes should not trump individual meetings with affected stakeholders.

Be Strategic in how FRPA Engages with BDCP

A few interviewees suggested that because FRPA and BDCP have similar broad goals, FRPA could use the existing BDCP forum instead of “reinventing the wheel.” However, most

interviewees reflected that FRPA should begin a new process and distance itself from BDCP due to the relatively slower BDCP process and lack of decision implementation.

Stakeholders suggested the following existing Delta processes with which FRPA could coordinate to inform and receive input into planning:

- Central Valley Joint Venture
- County Agricultural Advisory Committees
- County Board of Supervisors
- Delta Conservancy meetings (for its stakeholder base and relationship with counties)
- Delta Farm Bureau Caucus
- Delta Levees Habitat Advisory Committee
- Delta Protection Commission
- Delta Regional Ecosystem Restoration Implementation Plan
- Delta Stewardship Council
- Dixon, Solano and Suisun Resource Conservation District meetings
- Duck Clubs (Glide In, H Pond, Senator Outing)
- Farm Bureau
- Hartland Nursery ecotours
- Interagency Ecological Program
- Lion's Clubs (guest speaking opportunities)
- Lower Yolo Bypass Planning Forum
- Methylmercury groups
- Reclamation Districts
- Rotary Clubs
- Sacramento Valley Conservancy
- SFWCA meetings
- Solano County Water Agency meetings
- State of the Estuary Conference
- Yolo Bypass Fisheries Enhancement Planning Team
- Yolo Bypass Working Group

3.3.4. Potential Outreach Challenges

Interviewees were asked: *What particular challenges do you foresee in FRPA engaging with interested agencies, constituents or communities in the Delta and Suisun Marsh?*

In evaluating the feasibility of implementing the BiOps, interviewees were asked to point out potential challenges that they foresee arising as FRPA staff develops the planning process and solicits stakeholder input. The feedback received from interviewees varied from general comments on the current atmosphere and attitude toward restoration in the Delta, to specific comments on soliciting input. Below is a summary of the key outreach challenges described by the interviewees.

Confusion Over Delta Restoration Projects

Many of the interviewees noted that, in light of the multitude of restoration initiatives in the Delta, stakeholders may have difficulty understanding the FRPA program and its relationship to other initiatives.

General Resistance Due to Relationship to State and Federal Water Projects

Some interviewees noted that local landowners might resist conversion of agricultural land and perhaps consider the program to unfairly benefit water contractors at the expense of the Delta. Some interviewees also expressed concern that the benefits of this project “flow south” and that this project does not “resonate” with locals. A related concern was that FRPA was an overdue process, and had the long-term operations of the State Water Project addressed these issues earlier, the area would not require restoration. Some interviewees felt unfairly burdened by the consequences of past management decisions.

Overloaded Local Stakeholders

Interviewees noted that local stakeholders are currently “overloaded with information,” so getting their attention in light of time and energy constraints for a new process could be a challenge.

Challenges of Relationship to BDCP

Many interviewees relayed that perceptions of a close relationship between FRPA and BDCP may add “hostility” to the FRPA implementation process. These interviewees felt that while it is important to clarify the relationship between FRPA and BDCP, FRPA needs to strive to effectively differentiate both programs.

History of State-Local Relationships

Many interviewees noted that many stakeholders in the Delta have concerns about DWR and CDFW. DWR and CDFW are perceived by some as having a history of: not always being good neighbors (i.e. not taking adequate care of their properties, not always paying their fair share), poor communication on past projects, lacking coordination and collaboration with local governments and heavy handedness with regard to local governments.

Several interviewees reflected that there is a perception that the Implementing Agencies communicate poorly with local stakeholders and do not emphasize local impacts as well as stakeholders expect. These interviewees have noticed in their communities an increasing distrust with government and a level of defensiveness with new projects or restoration efforts.

3.4. Keys to Success

3.4.1. Suggested Implementation Strategies, Best Practices and Key Steps

Interviewees were asked: *What strategy would you suggest for FRPA to identify restoration opportunities? Do you know of any successful restoration processes in the Delta that FRPA could use as a model, or can you suggest “best practices”?*

Although few of the interviewees were able to identify examples of restoration processes that they viewed as models of success, they were able to provide key principles that lead to success. Below is a list of recommended biological, collaborative or other types of strategies that could support effective FRPA planning and implementation.

Phased Approach

Many interviewees encouraged FRPA to demonstrate restoration success with initial projects before moving on to subsequent ones. They recommended a phased yet constantly forward-moving process that provides momentum to restore remaining areas in the long run. Interviewees recommended that the Implementing Agencies focus on projects that can proceed, have support and have a high likelihood of success. Interviewees recommended that DWR begin implementing restoration on State-owned properties and avoid high-value lands closer to the levees.

Several of the interviewees viewed FRPA as a “test case” of sorts for BDCP. Implementing FRPA prior to BDCP could be beneficial for community acceptance, as FRPA actions can be implemented sooner and could show the public that habitat restoration projects can be efficient and successful. However, interviewees also generally expressed the view that FRPA and BDCP should be portrayed as separate programs, and their differences and implications for each other should be clearly communicated so that the public is not confused.

Early Communication and Coordination

Some interviewees anticipated that lesser-informed stakeholders might speculate about DWR and CDFW’s intentions with respect to FRPA, so communicating early on the specific goals of FRPA will help reduce this. The key messaging should communicate that there are BiOp and ITP requirements that currently exist and that the State is required to achieve them. Many interviewees also recommended that the Implementing Agencies consider coordinating with entities that have already been conducting restoration work in specific locations and utilize existing expertise (e.g. water agency engineers). Many respondents encouraged the State to proactively and clearly identify who manages FRPA, where the funding is coming from and the process to ensure that ecological restoration objectives are being achieved.

Communication and Engagement with Landowners

In selecting restoration lands, interviewees recommended that Implementing Agencies develop a list of landowners in each potential restoration area, give them a stake in the design and solution and attempt to act on their suggestions. It was indicated that otherwise, landowners will be suspicious of top-down solutions. One interviewee suggested that FRPA commit to meet with landowners and work together toward a common goal to avoid past problems.

Partnerships with Local Governments

Some interviewees reflected that the Implementing Agencies should create strong partnerships with local governments and explore how local governments can add value to the process (e.g. leading local studies or jointly-funded studies). The State should clearly communicate its plans to preserve agricultural land in accordance with local land use plans.

Landscape-Scale Planning and Best Practices

Many interviewees expressed concern about a “postage stamp” approach to restoration (i.e. restoring lands that are not connected to each other or other habitats). As such, these interviewees supported a “measured” approach to restoration that does not rush property acquisition or permitting in order to achieve the 8,000 acre target. They recommended creating a coherent restoration landscape with the right elevation and water flows, connectivity to adjacent terrestrial habitat and range of opportunities for fishes to spawn and rear geographically in order to meet the specific restoration objectives. It was indicated that there

may be parcels that are critical for restoration that cost more, but they will save money down the road for conservation.

Most interviewees recommended that DWR and CDFW develop a restoration plan that outlines specific objectives, and only acquire property that meets those objectives. Interviewees encouraged waiting for larger areas to become available and recommended taking a disciplined approach to restoring properties. Several interviewees recommended a similar model to identify and acquire restoration lands: 1) identify objectives; 2) consider habitat/ecological connectivity; 3) judiciously identify technical/restoration criteria and ecological value of properties; 4) develop a list of landowners in potential restoration areas and engage with them; 5) and wait for optimal properties that fit long-term strategic goals. The land that is chosen for restoration should be consistent with selection criteria, and not chosen for perceived convenience or ease of purchase. Similarly, the State needs to encourage a bottom-up approach that stimulates local landowner participation and encourages landowners to engage with the State in property selection. Interviewees recommended that the State purchase properties for restoration based on a collaborative and local selection process.

Several interviewees also encouraged Implementing Agencies to lean on specific scientific and technical criteria and objectives to establish the ecological values that will help determine lands suitable for restoration purposes. These interviewees encouraged implementation agencies to be clear about what scientific principles are driving the planning process and adaptive management provisions. They also suggested that Implementing Agencies identify opportunities for “trades,” property exchanges and equitable land valuation.

Many of the interviewees recommended that restoration design be made based on best available science and current data due to the high levels of uncertainty of restoration projects, that small projects be conducted as tests and that restoration efforts consider the success and challenges of recent restoration. One interviewee recommended “Water Plan for the 21st Century” (available on the Restore the Delta website: <http://www.restorethedelta.org/>) as a helpful reference.

Several interviewees recommended that the FRPA Implementing Agencies consider securing funding for long-term management of the properties in order to be a good neighbor, especially for vegetation management, long-term ecological restoration monitoring, operations and maintenance and flood control.

Specific Processes to Use as Models

Interviewees suggested the following restoration processes as potential models to emulate or learn from:

- The Nature Conservancy’s model to identify possible restoration areas in Suisun Marsh.
- Yolo Bypass Working Group (landowners proposed restoration opportunities and received grants to capture and contain increased flood waters).
- Sherman and Twitchell Islands (DWR is growing vegetation and aiming for ground surface increase).
- Cosumnes River restoration (considered to be successful by agricultural stakeholders as it emphasized natural processes and used public/private funding).
- Mandeville Island process (creation of a habitat project for waterfowl habitat, involving duck clubs).
- Westervelt mitigation bank or other mitigation banks.

- Blacklock parcel in Suisun Marsh (willing seller process with available funding DWR funding and common goals).
- Delta Regional Ecosystem Restoration Implementation Plan (model of reviewing above-design-scale proposal for site restoration with existing tool and vetting processes).

3.4.2. Suggested Approaches to Avoid

Interviewees were asked: *Can you think of past restoration processes that have not been successful and offer advice to FRPA on approaches to avoid?*

In order to avoid duplicating the mistakes of past restoration efforts, interviewees generally recommended that FRPA engage in a local-level, project-specific, collaborative process (although some interviewees acknowledged that consensus may not be possible in all cases). Some restoration processes have followed a “decide-announce-defend” model, but interviewees recommended that FRPA solicit input and public involvement to avoid this. Interviewees also repeatedly mentioned that FRPA should avoid eminent domain and that short- and long-term restoration costs should not be placed on landowners.

In terms of specific past restoration processes that were not deemed a success by the interviewees, interviewees offered the following:

- Decker Island was not considered a good process because it did not use the best available science, was not vetted with the scientific community and created habitat for exotic species in subtidal habitat.
- SFWCA’s actions at Yolo Ranch left a bad feeling for some stakeholders in the area, as SFCWA began restoration without involving or communicating with county governments. This has set the tone for future restoration in Yolo County that FRPA needs to consider.
- Other restoration processes, such as at Dutch Slough, are not moving fast enough.

4. COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Below is a summary of key views and recommendations generally reflected by interviewees as important to building community acceptance and effectively implementing a long-term restoration program. They provide the key messages for the Communications and Engagement Plan.

1. Early on in the restoration planning process, distinguish FRPA from other habitat restoration programs.
2. Express willingness by the FRPA Implementing Agencies to work collaboratively with existing land use plans, local governments and restoration efforts. Get off on the right foot to avoid local opposition.
3. Clearly communicate that FRPA is intended to be willing seller process. Safe harbor exists for landowners willing to collaborate with the program.
4. Restoration and agricultural uses can be compatible; restoration does not necessarily decrease property values.

5. Develop a visible public process, be clear about FRPA's intentions and process, and communicate what the implementing agencies realistically expect to achieve. Explain the urgency and legal drivers for the program, but also the consequences of non-implementation.
6. Communicate and create proactive, constructive and forward-looking partnerships early-on with potentially affected landowners and local governments. Recognize locals for on-the-ground knowledge and provide periodic access to high-level to decision makers. Focus public engagement to specific projects where the Implementing Agencies are willing to act.
7. Develop win-win strategies for all stakeholders, for example flood control assurances, increases in water supply reliability, water quality improvements, lessened regulatory burden or lower maintenance costs. Communicate that the Implementing Agencies are taking action to do something good and committed to finding a balance between optimizing the restoration benefits and minimizing potential negative impacts.
8. Approach the process with a sound scientific foundation and acceptance of adaptive management.
9. Coordinate and consolidate outreach on FRPA around other existing restoration projects to the extent possible and present updates on FRPA through other existing Delta venues. Utilize existing expertise to achieve ecological restoration objectives.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT

Background and Interests

1. What is your organizational affiliation and your role in your organization?
2. What are your organization's interests in the Delta and/or Suisun Marsh and restoration of habitat located within the Delta and/or Suisun Marsh for fish populations?

Understanding of FRPA

3. What is your understanding of the basic FRPA program purpose and activities?
4. How well do you believe your peers and other stakeholders understand the FRPA program?

Issues and Concerns

5. *Prospect Island*: As a first step at restoring the 8,000 acres called for by the Biological Opinions and Incidental Take Permit, the FRPA agencies have identified Prospect Island as a site for restoration. Much of Prospect Island is already owned by the State. What are your key concerns or anticipated challenges likely to arise in connection with restoration at Prospect Island?
6. Other potential restoration locations under consideration for FRPA implementation include but are not limited to: Cache Slough Complex, Suisun Marsh and the Yolo Bypass. What are your key concerns or anticipated challenges that could arise in connection with restoration at these and other potential locations?
 - a. General area
 - b. Cache Slough Complex
 - c. Yolo Bypass
 - d. Suisun Marsh
 - e. Other?

Informing the Development of an Outreach, Coordination and Engagement Approach

7. Who are the major interests or stakeholders (e.g., landowners, local governments, other Delta programs, etc.) potentially impacted by FRPA that should be consulted?
8. What is the best way to inform these stakeholders about FRPA, in order to get their input on potential restoration planning in the Delta and Suisun Marsh?
9. Are there existing outreach or technical processes that you are aware of with which the FRPA program should be working in order to best involve your or other organizations (e.g., particular meetings or meeting times, technical work groups, stakeholder groups, forums, existing channels or other processes)?
10. Do you foresee any particular challenges in FRPA engaging with interested agencies, constituents or communities in the Delta and Suisun Marsh?

Potential Opportunities and Keys to Success

11. What strategy would you suggest for FRPA to identify restoration opportunities?
12. Do you know of any successful restoration processes in the Delta that FRPA could use as a model, or can you suggest “best practices”?
13. Can you think of past restoration processes that have not been successful and offer advice to FRPA on approaches to avoid?
14. What does FRPA need to do to help reduce tension and make progress toward gaining community acceptance and support in carrying out the habitat restoration objectives?

Other Questions

15. What other key stakeholders or interests would you recommend that we interview as part of this assessment process?
16. Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX B: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Interviewee	Title/Role	Organization/ Affiliation
Brown, Doug	Delta Counties Coalition Coordinator at Douglas Environmental	Delta Counties Coalition
Cain, John	Director of Conservation for California Flood Management	American Rivers
Chappell, Steve	Executive Director	Suisun Resource Conservation District
Dr. Hastings, Lauren	Deputy Executive Officer Science	Delta Stewardship Council – Delta Plan
Eisenstein, Bill	Executive Director, CREC	UC Berkeley
Emlen, Bill	Director of Resource Management	Solano County Department of Resource Management
Goodman, Gary	Assistant Manager	Sacramento and Yolo Mosquito & Vector Control District
Goulart, Roberta	Technical and administrative support for the Delta Water Program	Solano County Department of Resource Management
Hardesty, Mike	Executive Director	Reclamation District 2068 (Solano)
Ingram, Campbell	Executive Officer	Delta Conservancy
Kulakow, Robin	Executive Director	Yolo Bypass Working Group
Marchand, Petrea	Manager of Intergovernmental Affairs	Yolo County
McCreary, Jeff	Director for Conservation Programs	Ducks Unlimited
Minton, Jonas	Water Policy Advisor	Planning and Conservation League
Nemeth, Karla	Project Director	Bay Delta Conservation Plan
Neudeck, Chris	Engineer	Reclamation District 501 (Ryer)
Okita, David	General Manager	Solano County Water Agency/HCP
Pollack, Lynnel	Former board member	Yolo County Farm Bureau
Rosenfield, Jon	Conservation Biologist	The Bay Institute
Scholl, Marty	Ecological Management Supervisor	Sacramento and Yolo Mosquito & Vector Control District
Terry, Melinda	Manager	North Delta Water Agency
van Loben Sels, Russell		Landowner
Webber, Bob	Executive Director	Reclamation District 999 (Clarksburg)
Winternitz, Leo	Delta Project Director	The Nature Conservancy
Zuckerman, Tom	Landowner, advisor	

APPENDIX C: ABBREVIATIONS

BDCP	Bay Delta Conservation Plan
BiOp	Biological Opinion
C & E Plan	Communications and Engagement Plan
CVP	Central Valley Project
DFG	California Department of Fish & Game
CDFW	California Department of Fish & Wildlife
DWR	California Department of Water Resources
HCP/NCCP	Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Community Conservation Plan
ITP	Incidental Take Permit
K&W	Kearns & West
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
SFWCA	State and Federal Water Contractors Association
SWP	State Water Project
USACE	US Army Corps of Engineers
USBR	US Bureau of Reclamation
USFWS	US Fish & Wildlife Service

