

Meeting Notes
NORTH DELTA IMPROVEMENTS GROUP
Wednesday, March 3, 2004
9:30-11:30 at Jones & Stokes (2600 V Street)

ATTENDANCE LIST:

Aramburu, Margit	Delta Protection Commission (DPC)
Brown, Ken	KCRA-TV
Burkholder, Brad	California Department of Fish and Game (DFG)
Clark, Robert	North Delta Water Agency (NDWA)
Clamurro, Lori	Delta Protection Commission (DPC)
Crouch, Craig	County of Sacramento Department of Water Resources
Darsie, Bill	KSN, Inc.
Dudas, Joel	California Department of Water Resources (DWR)
Elliott, Chris	Jones & Stokes
Fernandez, Patricia	California Bay-Delta Authority (CBDA)
Fleenor, Bill	UC Davis
Florsheim, Joan	UC Davis
Hastings, Lauren	California Bay-Delta Authority (CBDA)
Hoppe, Walt	Point Pleasant
Knittweis, Gwen	California Department of Water Resources North Delta (DWR)
Kreinberg, Grant	Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency (SAFCA)
Martin, Monica	California Department of Water Resources North Delta (DWR)
Martin, Sara	Jones & Stokes
Mello, Steve	NDWA and Reclamation District 563
Miyamoto, Joe	East Bay Municipal Utilities District (EBMUD)
Olah, Ryan	United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)
Ott, Ron	California Bay-Delta Authority (CBDA)
Schmutte, Curt	California Department of Water Resources North Delta (DWR)
Stuart, Jeff	NOAA Fisheries
Toor, Surjit	Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Trieu, Don	MBK Engineers
Van Loben Sels, Topper	Delta Protection Commission (DPC)/North Delta Water Agency (NDWA)
Whitener, Keith	The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
Wilson, Daniel	Delta Protection Commission (DPC)
Zemitis, Collette	California Department of Water Resources North Delta (DWR)
Zezulak, Dave	California Department of Fish and Game (DWR)

HANDOUTS

- Meeting Agenda
- “Balancing Tradeoffs” Worksheet

1. INTRODUCTIONS AND WELCOME – Gwen Knittweis, DWR

Gwen Knittweis welcomed everyone to the meeting, facilitated a round of introductions, and ensured that everyone had copies of the handouts.

2. DISCUSSION OF PROJECT TRADEOFFS (FINDING WIN-WIN) – Team, DWR

Curt Schmutte announced to the group that the day’s meeting was one of the most important, if not the most important, meetings the NDIG has ever had. He explained that the meeting attendees would have the opportunity to vote on a series of project-related trade-offs in order to give the

project team a deeper understanding of stakeholder priorities. Each NDIG member will be able to vote between 12 sets of competing interests. The goal of the exercise is to help the project focus on the most important objectives. The project staff will not move forward with the project until consensus among the NDIG members is reached, compromise between competing interests has been achieved, and the project has garnered the widest base of support possible, most likely through more rounds of voting throughout the year. Curt then introduced the “ballots,” poster-sized figures of balances (on a fulcrum, like a teeter-totter) with competing interests at either end, as follows:

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|--|-----|--|
| <p>1. Increased Conveyance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ extensive setback levees | vs. | <p>Control Cost</p> |
| <p>2. Large Project Cost</p> | vs. | <p>Ability to Finance</p> |
| <p>3. Control Growth</p> | vs. | <p>Increase Flood Control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ increase conveyance ▪ increase detention |
| <p>4. Expediency</p> | vs. | <p>More Analysis</p> |
| <p>5. Create Aquatic Habitat at M-W*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ floodplain ▪ channels ▪ tidal marsh | vs. | <p>Discourage Exotics</p> |
| <p>6. Encourage Natural Processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ breeches ▪ channels | vs. | <p>Control Mosquitoes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ water control structures |
| <p>7. Create Aquatic Habitat for Fish</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ open up M-W* ▪ access to floodplain/wetlands | vs. | <p>Avoid Fish Losses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ avoid stranding/pumping due to higher levees/detention basins ▪ avoid dredging impacts |
| <p>8. Increase Ecological Opportunities on M-W*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ aquatic habitat ▪ wetlands/channel habitat | vs. | <p>Minimize Downstream Impacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ minimize dredging ▪ minimize detention on Staten |
| <p>9. Levee off Southwest M-W*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ subsidence reversal ▪ minimize exotics | vs. | <p>Don't levee off Southwest M-W*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ maximize natural processes ▪ avoid intensive maintenance needs ▪ avoid fish stranding/pumping ▪ allow non-motorized boating access |
| <p>10. Acres for Flood Detention on Staten</p> | vs. | <p>Acres for Cranes/Agriculture</p> |
| <p>11. Minimize Ecosystem Impacts</p> | vs. | <p>Allow for Recreation Access</p> |
| <p>12. Low Capital \$ / High O&M \$</p> | vs. | <p>High Capital \$ / Low O&M \$</p> |

*M-W stands for McCormack-Williamson Tract

A meeting attendee asked for clarification of #9 and Curt explained that subsidence reversal would be a goal that, once reached, would result in opening up McCormack-Williamson Tract to tidal action and other natural processes. Topper Van Loben Sels then asked why the group is being asked to vote on growth (#3) when the project team has already made it clear that the project will not affect the 100-year flood plain. Curt answered that the project team has been asked to take a step back and find out if the stakeholders would prefer greater flood protection to controlling growth. He explained that if this project provided a large enough reduction in flood risk to areas of the North Delta, these areas could be redesignated by FEMA as outside of the 100-year floodplain, which would probably attract a lot more development to the area. Because a large outcry was made for this project to not cause any growth-inducing impacts in the area, the project team has been working on

designing flood control components that would reduce the flood surge in the area, yet not affect the 100-year flood plain.

Grant Kreinberg explained that SAFCA and the Sacramento County Department of Water Resources are requesting that the environmental impact report (EIR) analyze the economic and environmental impacts of an alternative that would provide greater flood protection. A meeting attendee recommended that the way to avoid growth-inducing impacts is to buy conservation easements before completion of the project. Curt pointed out that mitigating growth-inducing impacts is expensive, time-consuming, and politically charged, and that's the trade-off. The poll is asking whether it is worth it to the stakeholders to analyze an alternative that provides much greater flood protection even though it could mean much greater expense and delays.

Topper mentioned that he felt he needed more details before he voted, in order to make informed decisions. For example, the cross-levee on Staten could be a benefit to cranes in the non-flood years, as it could save half the island in the event that a levee failure occurred at either end. Another meeting attendee asked what time timeframe of the project would be. Curt responded that it depends on the support of the stakeholders. He then gave a hypothetical situation. If the meeting were to close with everyone coming to a consensus, a final EIR would probably be ready this time next year, with construction potentially starting the year after that provided implementation funding is available.

Gwen explained the logistics of voting—everyone is given 12 green stickers, one for each balance figure, and one orange sticker, to place on the balance that the voter felt was the most important. The stickers could be placed near the fulcrum if the voter felt that the conflicting issues were equally important, or nearer to one end or the other, depending on how strongly the voter felt. Voters were encouraged to write their initials on the voting dots, but it was not mandatory. Voting ensued.

The results for the tradeoffs voting are provided in the attached document. (Note that some issues will be re-voted at a future meeting per stakeholder request. In discussions following the exercise, it became apparent that stakeholders needed clarification on some of the issues and wanted the chance to revisit the issue after more detail was provided).

After the voting, Daniel Wilson asked Curt to discuss any of the results that surprised him. Curt noted that he was surprised to see, at the same time, a favor for increased conveyance (over control cost) and for increased flood control (over controlling growth) as well as favor for project expediency. He explained that these were dichotomies since a larger project would take longer to finance and implement and an increase in flood control to the point that mitigation for growth impacts was needed would greatly slow down the process. The group commented that it was not clear in voting for “increase flood control” versus “control growth” that there were significant schedule, cost, and financing implications and suggested more clarification. Margit Aramburu pointed out that the group was not asked to vote on each balance relative to the other balances that were posted, but simply between options on each discrete balance, so too much should not be read into the votes on each balance relative to the other balances.

Curt said he was also surprised to see that voting was unanimous to not levee off the southwest end of McCormack-Williamson, when it would minimize the amount of time it would take to get that land back up to intertidal elevation. Daniel Wilson explained that he saw another leveed-off piece of land as another flood surge risk. Curt explained that the subsidence-reversal levees being considered for that location would be just high enough to keep the floodwaters out, and would be completely

submerged during flood events. The meeting attendees expressed their concern that they might have voted differently if they had known that information in advance. The project team acknowledged that the voting could not be 100 percent accurate because not everyone had all the information. Margit suggested refining the issues and revisiting the voting.

Steve Mello wanted it put on the record that he voted for “high capital cost and low O&M cost” with the caveat that every project requires some O&M costs. Bob Clark said that he voted the same way because local reclamation districts are usually saddled with raising the O&M money after the project construction is complete and the federal and state agencies have left.

Curt then encouraged the group to look at where the orange dots were concentrated, as those would be the indicator of the most important issues. Topper said that he placed his orange dot on “increase flood control” because he is most concerned with protecting the citizens in Walnut Grove and Locke. The issue of increased flood control versus increased cost due to growth-inducing impacts was again discussed, and Curt asked the group hypothetically if they would prefer completion of a project in 3 years that would offer 60-year flood protection or a project completed in 10 years that would offer 150-year flood protection. Daniel Wilson responded that he would vote for the 60-year flood protection in a shorter time frame simply because this project has been in progress for 15 years and something, anything, needs to be done very soon. Grant reiterated that this is a hypothetical scenario. Daniel agreed that the years can’t be quantified at this time, but he felt it was obvious that a 60-year project would be easier and cheaper to implement than a 150-year project. The project team then agreed to refine the concepts on the balances, especially flood control versus growth and the southwest levee issue previously discussed, and bring it back to vote at a later date.

3. PROJECT RECREATION COMPONENTS – Gwen Knittweis, DWR

Gwen tabled this discussion until the next NDIG meeting, as the tradeoff discussion went beyond the amount of time allotted for it in the agenda.

4. LEVEE FAILURE CRITERIA APPROACH – Monica Martin, DWR

Monica Martin then gave a presentation on DWR’s approach to designing levee failure criteria. This is the criteria that will be used in MBK’s calibrated HEC-RAS model to analyze the benefits of the project’s flood control alternatives relative to each other. The Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) was going to design this criteria, however DWR has taken over this task since the Corps is no longer proceeding with this item. She informed the group that they are currently trying to identify the minimum distance between the top of the levee and the water surface elevation for each model reach, as that would be the most likely failure point.

Monica asked for input from the group on the water surface elevation trigger for levee failure. DWR had been contemplating using the top of the levee. Daniel Wilson said that a foot below the top of the levee would be more realistic, since most levees fail before overtopping due to the “wild card” factor, like gopher holes. Craig Crouch asked if there were any data on qualitative factors like levee stability. Monica answered that they don’t have any geotech work since the purpose of this modeling is to do a comparative study on the benefits of each alternative relative to the other alternatives. Craig then suggested that DWR also poll the levee maintenance community on water surface elevation triggers. The NDIG voted on the elevation trigger, with a result in favor of using one foot below levee top.

5. DRAFT ALTERNATIVES EVALUATION PROCESS DOCUMENT – Gwen Knittweis, DWR

Gwen announced the completion of the draft Alternatives Evaluation Process Document, a comprehensive overview of the process that led to the development of the project alternatives. It gives the reader a good idea of where the project team currently is in their thought process. Monica mentioned that DWR now has an FTP site, and that the document can be downloaded from there without it clogging up slow e-mail systems. With the caveat that there is still analysis left to do and that there are refinements yet to be made, Gwen said that the project team is recommending moving forward with the four flood control alternatives presented in the document.

6. EIR UPDATE – Chris Elliott, Jones & Stokes

Chris Elliott explained to the group that Jones & Stokes is currently working with DWR to develop the alternatives into a flexible, EIR-level project description. J&S is working to ensure that the project description is flexible and that it addresses the concerns brought forward in the public scoping process. Each of the four flood control and seven ecological alternatives will be analyzed separately in the EIR and will be “mix and matchable”. As of now, the projected schedule is as follows:

May 2004	Administrative Draft EIR complete
August 2004	Draft EIR complete
April 2005	Final EIR complete
Summer 2005	Action Specific Implementation Plan complete

7. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for 9:30 a.m. to noon on Wednesday, May 5, 2004 at Jones & Stokes.