

Meeting Notes
NORTH DELTA IMPROVEMENTS GROUP MEETING
Wednesday, September 22, 2004
9:30-11:30 at Jones & Stokes (2600 V Street)

ATTENDANCE LIST:

Burkholder, Brad	California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG)
Cosio, Gilbert	MBK Engineers
Dutton, Bill	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR)
Elliott, Chris	Jones & Stokes
Fernandez, Patricia	California Bay-Delta Authority (CBDA)
Fleenor, Bill	University of California, Davis (UCD)
Hadl, Stefan	KCRA-TV
Harvey, Tom	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Hoppe, Walt	Point Pleasant
Knittweis, Gwen	California Department of Water Resources North Delta (DWR)
Kreinberg, Grant	Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency (SAFCA)
Labrie, Gil	DCC Engineering
Martin, Monica	California Department of Water Resources North Delta (DWR)
Olah, Ryan	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Schmutte, Curt	California Department of Water Resources North Delta (DWR)
Smith, Jim	East Bay Municipal Utility District
Van Loben Sels, Topper	Delta Protection Commission (DPC)/North Delta Water Agency (NDWA)
Whitener, Keith	The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
Zemitis, Collette	California Department of Water Resources (DWR)

HANDOUTS

- Meeting Agenda
- Meeting Notes from May 5, 2004 meeting
- excerpts from detention basin levee conceptual report (from Hultgren-Tillis)

1. INTRODUCTIONS – Gwen Knittweis, DWR

Gwen Knittweis welcomed everyone to the meeting and facilitated a round of introductions.

2. ALTERNATIVES REFINEMENT – Gwen Knittweis/Collette Zemitis, DWR

Gwen Knittweis described the conceptual design for the detention basin cross-levee developed by Hultgren-Tillis in response to Division of Safety of Dams (DSOD) guidelines. It was noted that the setback levees would be exempt from DSOD involvement. Two conceptual design cross sections were distributed, distinguished by excavation of peat soils or leaving the existing substrate in place. Additional geotechnical information would be needed for detailed design. Slurry walls for seepage protection were identified to be needed for the levee tie-ins (abutments). Ms. Knittweis responded that erosion protection would be needed, as queried by Gil Cosio. It was committed that the Hultgren-Tillis report would be posted to the project website.

Topper Van Loben Sels asked follow-up questions from prior meeting discussions, notably regarding the consideration of water hyacinth becoming dislodged in high-flow events and affecting the operation of weir structures. Curt Schmutte agreed that it would need to be evaluated.

Ms. Knittweis continued the alternatives refinement discussion, noting that Northwest Hydraulic Consultants was conducting conceptual design for key flood control and ecosystem restoration features. It was also noted that a setback levee on New Hope would need to be evaluated.

Returning to the levee substrate discussion, Monica Martin agreed to display the organic soils map at the next meeting. Ms. Knittweis noted that historical slough alignments tended to be underlain with mineral soils, conducive to levee construction. Mr. Schmutte and Mr. Cosio noted that peat and mineral soils do not tend to be layered, but that a greater concern may be for underlying sand strata. The 1990 EIR provided guidance on dredge depths based on known sand strata, added by Ms. Knittweis.

The group transitioned into questions about communication of the modeling results. Specifically, Mr. Van Loben Sels stated interest in stage increases at New Hope presented by Mr. Fleenor (UCD) at the previous NDIG meeting. Mr. Fleenor presented hydraulic modeling results of ecosystem restoration scenarios on M-W Tract that were presented and discussed at the second science panel meeting. All scenarios included degrading M-W Tract levees without downstream mitigation, such as a detention basin. The upstream boundary for the modeling was at Benson's Ferry and the downstream boundary was at New Hope Landing. Once flood options are incorporated into the modeling (using the extended Mike 11 model) there will be a stage decrease at New Hope Landing when compared with pre-project flood stages using 1997 storm hydrology. Keith Whitener desired seeing results in isolation as well as with other flood options to gain confidence in results for sizing features (chiefly, detention basins on Staten Island) and to qualify the need for downstream detention. Mr. Cosio stressed the importance of knowing results from opening McCormack-Williamson Tract to flow (to determine the Least Environmentally Practicable Alternative and downstream impacts), particularly what the downstream impacts are in less than a 1-in-10 year event before the detention basin receives water as well as in higher events. UCD will be performing iterative hydraulic modeling so that the planning effort addresses all constraints of the project as well as determining the optimal sizing for all potential components of this project. Keith Whitener also discussed the importance of varying the east levee height to determine the sensitivity of conveying flood flows through M-W Tract as the levee height is adjusted. UCD is performing this analysis.

Collette Zemitis described the McCormack-Williamson Tract ecosystem restoration options to be presented as a poster at the CALFED Science Conference. She wrote conceptual models for the restoration options describing the expected habitat with each option. The "open system" option has the primary objective of promoting sedimentation and includes a degraded east levee with inflatable dam, a secondary channel, and a degraded southwest levee. The group discussed the inflatable dam element with doubts about its feasibility. Ms. Knittweis noted that Northwest Hydraulic Consultants would be conducting sediment modeling which should provide more information to refine this option. The importance of understanding and planning for the appropriate hydrology of McCormack-Williamson for fish, exotic colonization avoidance, and mosquito control was discussed by the group. Tom Harvey asked about potential mosquito problems if there was fall flooding in the floodplain options. Ms. Zemitis agreed that such flooding was a possibility and that it was unlikely that the Tract could be drained fast enough (within 48 hours) to avoid mosquito breeding.

3. HYDRAULIC MODELING UPDATE – Monica Martin, DWR

Ms. Knittweis provided an overview of the modeling coordination meeting from the previous week, including the sediment transport modeling, ensuring regional compatibility, using MIKE-11 with HEC-RAS corroboration, and levee failure criteria. Mr. Cosio, Bill Fleenor, and Grant Kreinberg

discussed calibration and accuracy of the MIKE-11 model. Specifically, Mr. Cosio asked about the calibration and verification, to which Mr. Fleenor responded that four years would be used, ranging from an approximate 2-year event to the '97 event (including '86). Mr. Cosio replied back that downstream reclamation districts would have concerns about the 2-foot differential in results relative to key locations for the '97 event. Mr. Fleenor described that calibration to a single year is subjective and of little value for evaluating a dynamic system, continuing that relative comparison between alternatives is more important than absolute values. Mr. Kreinberg and Mr. Cosio questioned the use of synthetic (range) hydrology rather than that of a specific event. Mr. Cosio further pointed out that accuracy was of higher and greater importance than relativity in determining specific impacts.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION UPDATE – Chris Elliott, Jones & Stokes

Chris Elliott provided an overview of the environmental documentation progress, focusing on the physical, biological, and social environmental factors. He described that the analysis methods, background information, potential impacts, and significance criteria have been established through a series of meetings between DWR and the consultant team over the summer. An ASIP coordination meeting was held, and there was general agreement that fish stranding, fish predation, sandhill cranes, dredging, and exotics were the major subject areas to be addressed. The follow-up action is to conduct charette meetings to further discuss project refinements to minimize impacts and maximize benefits.

5. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES – Gwen Knittweis, DWR

Mr. Schmutte observed that good progress is being made on the project, although trade-offs need to be recognized. Mr. Whitener noted the possibility of tying the project to the CALFED 10-year finance plan. Mr. Schmutte agreed and offered that the project's stakeholder support should allow it to rise to the top of the financing plan. Ms. Knittweis pointed out the possibility of future water bonds as well. Mr. Schmutte concluded that operation, maintenance, and monitoring needs should all be considered now to recognize the full project costs.

6. NEXT STEPS

Ms. Knittweis suggested November 17 for the next meeting.