



MEMORANDUM

To: Kelly Moroney, Kevin Foerster; USFWS
Dan Efseaff, Helen Swagerty; River Partners
Graham Matthews' Graham Matthews & Associates
Joyce Hunting, Keith Marine, Paul Uncapher; NSR
Michele Stevens, Earl Nelson; Department of Water Resources

From: Kerri Mikkelsen Rose; NSR

Date: April 19, 2004

Subject: Public Comments from 4/14/04 Public Meeting regarding La BARRANCA Restoration

NSR Project No.: 50317

This memorandum summarizes the comments received during the April 14, 2004, Public Meeting for Proposed Restoration of the La BARRANCA Unit, which was held in Red Bluff, California. Attending from the project team were Joyce Hunting (NSR), Kerri Mikkelsen Rose (NSR), Dan Efseaff (River Partners), Helen Swagerty (River Partners), Earl Nelson (DWR), Graham Matthews (GMA), Kevin Foerster (USFWS), Kelly Moroney (USFWS), and Jack Williamson (USFWS/AFRP). Other members of the public who attended were Serge Birk (CVPWA), Keith Marine (NSR), Thomas McCary (landowner); Chuck Crain (landowner), Ernie Ohlin (Tehama County Flood Control).

- [Serge Birk] How will the Plan to Minimize Impacts to Adjacent Landowners be provided other than online?
 - DWR response: This report will be freely available in hard copy format as well as online, and copies will be provided upon request.
- [Graham Matthews] What is the timing of the Plan to Minimize Impacts to Adjacent Landowners?
 - DWR response: There is no time restriction. However, the plan will be done before State funds are spent on activities to change topography, vegetation, or hydraulic conditions that might affect adjacent landowners.
- [Graham Matthews] How many Plan to Minimize Impacts to Adjacent Landowner reports have been prepared for your other projects?
 - DWR response: Of about 19 projects, 5 or 6 reports have been prepared.
- [Serge Birk] What are the differences between NEPA and CEQA?
 - DWR response: Because we do not yet have a funding agreement in place, DWR as CEQA Lead Agency has not spent time analyzing the specific CEQA requirements that would not normally be covered in the NEPA documents for this project. We do expect to “piggy back” on the NEPA documents and only supplement what is missing to avoid duplicative project costs. In general, NEPA and CEQA treat alternatives differently.

Economic impacts are also treated differently (purely economic impacts are by definition less-than-significant under CEQA, unless they cause significant physical impacts). The economics of this project will be examined to the extent necessary for determining project feasibility and for making any required CEQA findings.

- [Serge Birk] You have set forth multiple project objectives, but there needs to be a bigger picture approach that recognizes that the river will alter the landscape over time. The Refuge was initially purchased from The Nature Conservancy for the purpose of managing valley elderberry longhorn beetle and fish resources/habitat. How do these objectives fit together with DWR/USFWS objectives for the project? Do the objectives conflict?
 - DWR response: Our objective is to find the ideal balance that optimizes all of the competing project purposes.
- [Chuck Crain] Could a “2-year” flood event happen every year? The area behind the levee floods about every 3rd year by flows that back in and collect. Due to the flooding frequency of the area on the orchard side of the levee, fish entrapment could be an issue.
 - GMA response: A “2-year” event is a partial duration average. Due to multiple flood events that occur in a given year, a “2-year” event could happen annually.
- [Ernie Ohlin] Did you ground truth the DWR model?
- [Ernie Ohlin] DWR stakes high-flow events each year to ground truth flow modeling. You should contact them this year and have them stake the La Barranca site.
- [Ernie Ohlin] Is your model input based on survey data/ground truthing? Where did you survey?
 - GMA response: Yes, we took 20,000 survey points in the area shown on Map 1.
- [Earl Nelson] Ramping speed is carefully regulated on the Sacramento River because of pollution in the reservoir behind Keswick Dam.
- [Ernie Ohlin] By removing the levee, in a 1997-level storm would it impact Gerber? Areas to the west?
- [Jack Williamson] How does the interior pit currently fill?
 - Chuck Crain response: From the area to the Northwest, water bypasses the levee (does not overtop).
- [Serge Birk] Do you have any stage data representing your interpretations of “2-year,” “10-year,” “20-year” events?
- [Serge Birk] You said earlier that ramping is low – but the river dropped several feet in hours on the Refuge and Sacramento River system just this winter. The ramping down was clearly noticeable, and occurred rapidly.
- [Ernie Ohlin] Clarify your results shown in “Water Surface Elevation Changes – 20-year Flow” table. Under the “lush riparian” scenario, would you actually raise the flood level?

- GMA response: Yes, slightly, but the effect would be localized.
- River Partners response: Also remember that these are extremes, and our restoration plan will take these numbers into account. If our goals are zero-effect, we would plant low-lying vegetation such as grasses.
- [Ernie Ohlin] Additional flood storage is a benefit as far as my organization is concerned. It looks like there would be no effect for large scale events larger than 20 years.
- [Chuck Crain] Even at 100-year events the levee is not breached but water fills in from the northwest. The project would increase the flooding frequency.
- [Earl Nelson] This project was funded for the flood benefit. The proposal that was written to apply for grant funding indicated the project would improve the flooding situation for landowners downstream in areas such as Tehama, and the project was ranked competitively on that basis. The Flood Protection Corridor Program is first and foremost a funding source for flood benefit projects that also provide compatible ecosystem or agricultural land conservation benefits. Without flood benefits, projects are not eligible for funding from this source.
- [Serge Birk] Is the Purpose and Need Statement still being finalized?
- [Serge Birk] This project has a potential floodplain benefit that is obvious to anyone who has been out there. Establishing a riparian corridor is a very good benefit.
- [Serge Birk] I would like to provide input to the Purpose and Need.
- [Serge Birk] The information presented thus far is not conducive to concluding anything regarding stranding issues with juveniles. What are the risks/benefits to fish and flooding?
- [Serge Birk] There is enough evidence to suggest that fish entrapment is an issue onsite.
- [Serge Birk] What are the impacts to winter-run chinook? This is the species/ESU of most concern to my organization.
- [Serge Birk] Is there a way out for fish under the current design?
- [Serge Birk] We need to acknowledge that the Sacramento River is a controlled river. Last week we jumped up to 15,000 AF because of water quality issues in the Delta. So “20-year” and “5-year” events are not really an accurate way of describing flooding frequency in the project area.
- [Earl Nelson] Although it would be desirable to have complete information to answer all questions, it is impossible to have perfect information and some expert judgment must be relied on. In other words, we must go forward with imperfect data as some point, but we must also achieve a balance between the use of data and professional opinion, and the professional opinions should be based on enough data to be credible.
- [Ernie Ohlin] There is no one project that will provide the entire answer to flood problems. The solution will be the cumulative result of many small projects. We are hoping that this project will result in additional/increased flood storage, even if small, to contribute to the overall solution.

- [Chuck Crain] The further south the levee breach is, the less it would impact my lands. I can't see where the breach alternative would hurt fish.
- [Serge Birk] Aren't there fish other than salmon there, like pike and bass?
 - Chuck Crain response: No, but there are pike and bass in areas downstream of the project.
- [Ernie Ohlin] Natural variation in topography is a plus, rather than grading a flat slope.
- [Serge Birk] Will O&M be necessary? Will maintenance have to occur over time?
- [Chuck Crain] A roughness coefficient of 1.6 under the heavily wooded filter is preferred. Increased roughness [over an estimated 5-year period] won't change the frequency we see water, just how water comes in. Won't impact operations of my orchards. Also, the orchards on USFWS lands are entirely out of production and on their last legs so there are issues associated with fallow orchards that should be considered (infestations).
- [Serge Birk] Would "No Action" Alternative meet the project purpose?
- [Kevin Foerster] Our goals are to increase fish and wildlife, decrease flooding issues for neighbors.
- [Earl Nelson] Flood easements can be purchased up- or downstream to mitigate for any negative flood impacts. The goal would be to maximize benefits to some while minimizing negative impacts to others. If there are unavoidable negative impacts, they will have to be mitigated in some way, such as purchasing a flood easement. [Note: Flood Corridor Program grant funds can only be used for purchases from willing sellers.]