DELTA CONSERVATION FRAMEWORK

August 18, 2016 Workshop Summary

The following provides a summary of the Delta Conservation Framework (Framework) workshop held on August 18th, 2016. The workshop focused on a draft vision, purpose statement and principles for the Framework, as well as a discussion of Framework challenges and potential solutions.

Comments on Draft Vision

- Consider a longer planning horizon (>25 years). Actions should produce future, long-term opportunities.
- Define/clarify terms (e.g. vibrant community, mosaic, resilient, communities). Link to California Water Action Plan terms. Consider "healthy ecosystems" instead of "self-sustaining"
- Be more succinct.
- Add bullets to reflect multi-objective considerations and the importance of stakeholder buy-in.
- Recognize tradeoffs, constraints and the need to balance. Not all projects can be multi-benefit.
- Add environmental education and water supply reliability.
- Consider that some non-natives provide benefits.
- Ensure goals and objectives are achievable.
- Recognize the Delta as part of a larger system.

Comments on Draft Purpose

- Too many bullets. Condense/combine. Focus on 4-5 main points. Prioritize.
- Create a framework to solve problems and reduce stressors.
- Focus on facilitating implementation, cost-sharing, streamlined planning and permitting.
- Address long-term maintenance, management, monitoring and associated funding.
- Provide support for new grant programs and justification for funding requests.
- Find ways to appeal to landowners/farmers to improve practices to benefit wildlife.
- Incentivize system-wide benefits and cost sharing approaches.
- Go beyond just providing opportunities for public input. Create a forum for dialog.
- Mention levees and clarify water quality purpose (for whom?).
- Note BiOp requirements as a purpose.
- Clarify relationship to the Delta Plan, and other planning/regulatory efforts. Link to Delta Plan performance measures and adaptive management.
- Link the vision and purpose better.
- Consider the purpose of the process versus the product.

- Move items on "how" to principles and actions rather than purpose.

Comments on Draft Principles

- Tie components together more tightly. Condense. Principle #2 is vague.
- Emphasize Delta as Place more strongly.
- Mention water supplies – flows for people and flows for fish and wildlife.
- Incorporate the Good Neighbor check list/concept.
- Mitigate impacts to neighbors.
- Consider multi-benefit elements for projects, where applicable.
- Use technology to communicate and track goals and objectives over time.
- Provide opportunities for online stakeholder input
- Pursue a multi-stressor approach. Integrate into Principle #1.
- Add a principle on recreation and cultural values.
- Enhance multifunctional benefits.
- Recognize the current landscape and land use of the Delta. Don't try to restore it to historic ecological conditions.
- Consider impacts on the community, landowners, their livelihoods, and economy when restoring ecological function, processes, or natural communities.
- Create a separate principle for adaptive management - not just for habitat but for land management issues.

Challenges and Solutions

<u>Challenges Missing from the Draft List</u>:

1. Preserving access to reliable water supplies for local ag and regional M&I.
2. Flow requirements/management.
3. Resources for monitoring. Who's responsible? Where will funding come from? Data management and accessibility for supporting decisions.
4. Limitations of existing funding sources. For example, monitoring needs may occur beyond the duration of bond funding.
5. Limited information/maps of existing infrastructure (pipelines, powerlines, roads). For example, an unforeseen PG&E pipeline has stopped work on the Lower Putah Creek project.
6. Moving projects forward in a larger planning context (dealing with overlapping plans/planning). Coordination of efforts across the Delta. Making planning multi-objective and multi-jurisdictional. In many cases there are numerous plans, or planning underway that overlap geographically with proposed conservation areas. For example, flood planning in the Yolo Bypass.
7. Too many dispersed planning efforts and groups. Too many agencies involved. Planning fragmentation. Overlaps with #6 above.

8. Different authorities of different regulatory agencies. It has been a challenge working with a variety of agencies with different authorities on various components of a conservation project (eg. flood control and listed species).
9. Agency tunnel vision.
10. Conflicting land uses (eg. flood management, conservation and existing uses).
11. Integrating habitat on levees is sometimes not possible.
12. Liability issues related to restoration.
13. Lack of universal understanding regarding species conservation. Education. Dealing with uncertainty.
14. Building support (local, state and national) for Delta conservation. Federal involvement.
15. Addressing the Delta as a place.
16. Algal blooms
17. Ensuring economic vitality.

Solutions to Coordination across the Delta and Building Support:

1. Communicate across interests. Break out of traditional roles. Encourage more humility (ego management). Limit duplication of effort.
2. Seek/develop broad buy-in, starting with existing groups (eg. Salmon BiOp Work Group, Yolo Bypass Cache Slough CMF, RFMP, Yolo Bypass working group, Yolo/Cache Partnership). There are already many existing, functional groups facilitating discussion across local, state, and federal agencies. However, there is a need to be efficient with the number of groups and frequency of meetings to avoid meeting fatigue.
3. Community education (agency and public)
4. Work with/though RCDs and/or county ag departments, particularly on outreach and education to increase public/local awareness and build support.
5. Initiate a "Where does your water come from" campaign.
6. Consider a "planning congress" that has official representation by locals/counties.

Solutions to Balancing Conservation and Delta Community Goals:

1. Invest in local interests. Strive for community benefits and minimal impacts. Establish realistic goals and acknowledge that not everything will be a benefit.
2. Engage the community in the process.
3. Understand local interests.
4. Support socioeconomic research and incorporate it into restoration science.
5. Understand long-term agricultural trends/goals and how to balance those with conservation and other uses.
6. Consider potential long-term gains vs. short term impacts.
7. Reuse dredge materials for habitat and levees.

Solutions to Moving Projects Forward in a Larger Planning Context:

1. Implement small pieces at a time, recognizing larger framework. This could also apply to addressing climate change, for example by making strategic, incremental improvements over time to address deficient levees as needed. Spreading the costs out over time can make it more cost effective than waiting until it's an emergency and having to do major repairs at once.
2. Understand interactions and conflicts between plans.
3. Community education (agency and public)

Solutions to Avoiding Conflicts with Ag

1. Establish an onsite land manager that can help with neighboring landowner relations - good neighbor checklist.

Solutions to Long-term Funding Challenge:

1. Use general fund for long term funding and land management.
2. Contract with existing entities already managing lands in the Delta such as conservancies and NGO's.
3. Look to partnerships. Link to existing collaboratives (eg. Yolo).
4. Recognize that different entities will be appropriate for managing lands in different parts of the Delta.
5. Consider citizen science for helping with long-term monitoring needs.
6. Consider endowments for long-term O&M. Incorporate into the process early. Consider as part of compensatory mitigation.
7. Develop a consolidated list of funding opportunities maintained by one entity and available online.
8. Be aware of unfunded mandates.
9. Resolve water right uncertainties for potential restoration lands. Document for grant applicants how water right issues could be resolved.
10. Set up more preserves that involve working lands to build relationships.

Solutions to Permitting Challenges:

1. Expand mitigation banks and make them more affordable (e.g. public banks; Twitchell Island by DWR).
2. Provide funding for dedicated regulatory staff positions for restoration projects.
3. Bring together wetland restoration regulators and experts for regional meetings.
4. Establish a permitting ombudsman - someone to answer restoration practitioners' questions about permitting.
5. Provide executive sponsorship/championship (Governor, legislature, etc.)
6. Clarify processes to maximize efficiency in obtaining permits.
7. Summarize lessons learned from past projects.
8. Develop a guidebook for practitioners regarding: who to go to for each permit; keep it updated online.
9. Create a MOU or joint work plan.

10. Build (fee-based) permitting into program cost.
11. Use federal ESA Safe Harbor Agreements & State equivalent, i.e., CDFW-approved Voluntary Local Programs to enhance and maintain listed species.
12. Consider permits for non-mitigation.
13. Address inconsistent permit requirements (e.g. Tule Red wetland fill mitigation)
14. Consider regional approaches to permitting.
15. Design self-mitigating projects.
16. Acknowledge species lifecycles in take permits.

Solutions to Climate Change Challenge:

1. Tie efforts to existing State and other planning efforts.
2. Ensure strong levees.
3. Build consideration into planning and implementation of projects.

Solutions to Invasive Species:

1. Consider animal species as well as plants
2. Partner with organizations with experience. Take a multi-agency approach to leverage jurisdictions, equipment and data. Recognize connectedness.
3. Consider how to control after construction (eg. Decker Idsland). Use adaptive management, design and early action supported by monitoring. Recognize limitations.

Participants:

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