



*yolo basin foundation*

April 24, 2009

Ian Short  
Chairman  
TANC  
PO Box 15129  
Sacramento CA 95851

David Young  
NEPA Document Manager  
Western Area Power Administration  
114 Parkshore Drive  
Folsom, CA 95630

Subject: TANC Central 1 Route Scoping Comments

Dear Mr. Short:

The Yolo Basin Foundation is submitting these scoping comments in regards to the proposed Central 1 route that bisects a significant portion of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area on its north-south route through the Yolo Bypass, the large floodway that protects the City of Sacramento. We are concerned about the direct effects of the transmission lines on the operations and values of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. The Wildlife Area is managed specifically to attract waterfowl during their annual winter migration. Millions of federal dollars have been spent on the restoration of the wetlands in the Bypass as part of the North American Waterfowl Conservation Act, an international treaty between Canada, Mexico and the US. A location for transmission towers and an area that is managed for waterfowl and other birds are two mutually exclusive land uses.

Yolo Basin Foundation is a well-established nonprofit corporation that provides both environmental education for all ages and a unique collaborative approach to conservation in the Yolo Bypass. The Foundation is credited with being the driving force behind the partnerships that created the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area (also known as the Vic Fazio Yolo Wildlife Area), and we continue as the communication link among the many people and organizations that have an interest in land management issues in the Yolo Bypass.

The 16,000-acre Wildlife Area is owned and managed by California Department of Fish and Game. This mosaic of diverse wetland habitats is home to at least 200 bird species. In the winter there are hundreds of thousands of ducks, geese and swans that make it their winter destination after breeding in the northern marshes of Canada and Alaska. In the fall and spring, thousands of shorebirds pass through on their way to and from nesting grounds in the Arctic tundra and boreal forests of Alaska and Canada. They are replaced by orioles, kingbirds and swallows that winter in the tropics. A quarter of a million Mexican free-tailed bats raise their young in the expansion joints of the I-80 Causeway every summer and create a sunset spectacle as they fly out for their nightly foraging.

The amazing annual display of waterfowl that graces the daily commute for thousands of people over the Yolo Causeway takes place in the rice fields of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. Rice



farming is an integral part of the management of habitat while also providing income for Wildlife Area operations. The proposed Central 1 transmission route goes directly through the heart of the Area's rice growing operations. Airplanes are a key management tool for the application of soil amendments, seeds, and pesticides. The transmission towers would make it impossible to continue to grow this important crop, resulting in significant loss of habitat and income.

The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is a key study site for developing Best Management Practices for mosquito control. Among the Best Management Practices used to control mosquito populations in managed wetlands and rice fields is the aerial application of biological larvicides. Transmission lines bisecting the thousands of acres of rice fields and seasonal wetlands would present a significant impediment to vector control activities that protect the Sacramento metropolitan area.

Yolo Basin Foundation works in partnership with CA Fish and Game to provide field trips, lectures, and special events that make this public open space accessible to everyone. Hundreds of volunteers give generously of their time to make these popular programs successful. The Foundation's largest program, *Discover the Flyway* provides field trips for over 4,000 K-12 students from 15 schools districts from throughout the Sacramento Region annually. Since 1997 over 38,000 students and their teachers have participated in this program. For many of the children from low-income neighborhoods this is their first experience in a wild place, and a trip to the Wildlife Area can be a life-changing experience.

The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is a community open space jewel that is valued by countless people throughout the region. It provides wildlife watching opportunities, a place to walk, a place to paint and photograph, a place where people can just sit and enjoy the wild and a place to hunt in the fall and winter. The aesthetics of the Wildlife Area contribute to the whole experience, and the addition of transmission towers would seriously impact these values. There is also the negative visual impact to the thousands of commuters who travel the Causeway every day and look forward to the unimpeded view.

The Yolo Bypass Working Group, sponsored by the Yolo Basin Foundation, is an organization of landowners, farmers, hunters, and all levels of government agency staff that has met regularly since 1998. Working Group meetings provide a focused opportunity for participants to discuss issues related to the Yolo Bypass, including farming in the floodplain, improvements to the flood control system, water quality issues, habitat restoration projects, mosquito control, and public access.

The Yolo Bypass Working Group is a valuable forum in which to reach stakeholders who will be impacted by the proposed Central 1 route. We urge TANC to meet with this group before conducting any further work on this proposed route. The group has a long history of working towards collaborative solutions to complex land management issues. We are working with Janet Thomson of Kearns and West to schedule a meeting of the Yolo Bypass Working Group to discuss this matter with TANC representatives.

In summary the Yolo Basin Foundation has the following concerns:

The towers will have a negative impact to the aesthetic and visual qualities of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. The intrusive sight of high voltage transmission towers



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will compromise the signature scenic view showing the juxtaposition of the wetlands and the skyline of Sacramento.

The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is managed to attract migratory waterfowl and shorebirds to historic wetland areas. The presence of high voltage lines will result in increased bird strikes on the Wildlife Area, including listed species such as the Swainson's Hawk.

The placement of high voltage transmission towers in the Yolo Bypass will seriously compromise the recreational experiences of thousands of visitors to the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area including I-80 commuters, school children, and the wildlife viewing public.

High voltage transmission towers in the Yolo Bypass will be an impediment to farming operations, including the use of airplanes for the aerial application of herbicides and soil amendments.

Towers within the Yolo Bypass will alter the flood flows that move through in most years. The towers will accumulate debris carried in the floodwaters, such as tree branches, logs, and refuse. This creates an additional maintenance burden for the landowners in the Bypass.

The Yolo Basin Foundation will be scheduling a meeting of the Yolo Bypass Working Group to begin the dialogue that is needed to address the concerns of the community. My contact information is posted on our website [www.yolobasin.org](http://www.yolobasin.org). Thank you for consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Robin Kulakow  
Executive Director

cc:

Congressman Mike Thompson  
Senator Lois Wolk  
Assemblywoman Mariko Yamada  
Yolo County Board of Supervisors  
Davis City Council  
Don Koch, Director of California Department of Fish and Game  
Yolo Bypass Working Group  
Janet Thomson, Kearns & West