

**YOLO BYPASS WORKING GROUP
MEETING NO. 16**

***DRAFT*
MEETING MINUTES**

MEETING DATE: September 20, 2001

LOCATION: California Department of Fish and Game
Yolo Wildlife Area Headquarters
45211 County Road 32B (Chiles Road)
Davis, CA 95616

IN ATTENDANCE:

Robin Kulakow, Yolo Basin Foundation
Dave Feliz, California Dept. of Fish & Game (DFG)
Don Stevens, Glide-In Ranch
Chris Fulster, Glide-In Ranch
Mike Egan, Yolo Flyway
Selby Mohr, Mound Farms
John Currey, Dixon Resource Conservation District
Rick Martinez, Martinez Bros. Farming
Mark Kearney, Landowner
Ron Tadlock, Tadlock Farms
Al Wright, DFG
Dennis Kilkenny, Dawson Duck Club, No Man's Land Fire District
Chris Unkel, The Nature Conservancy
Lori Clamurro, Delta Protection Commission
Mike Hardesty, Reclamation District 2068
Dennis Murphy, Murphy Farms
Ed Towne, Bull Sprig Outing
Greg Schmid, Los Rios Farms
Duncan McCormack III, Yolo Ranch
Mark Hennelly, California Waterfowl Assn. (CWA)
Robert Gill, Landowner
Pat Perkins, DFG
Boone Lek, California Dept. of Water Resources (DWR)
Ted Sommer, DWR
Ray Thompson, Skyraker Duck Club
Mary Ellen Baldwin, aide to Supervisor Lois Wolk

Currently, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DWR, the State Reclamation Board, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; and DFG affirms that the primary purpose of the Bypass is flood control and that the Wildlife Area would not be managed specifically for threatened and endangered species.

A lot of public use takes place in the existing Wildlife Area. So far, 6,000 hunters have used the land; within that group, the number of junior hunters has doubled. So far, the education program has had 7,700 youth and 600 parent participants who came to learn about wildlife.

The newly acquired lands have variable vegetative features. Glide Causeway Ranch is used for the production of wild rice, safflower, and tomatoes. Tule Ranch has some grazed and some fallow lands. DFG wants to continue the grazing, as grazing is an integral part of grassland management. Feed may be grown through agricultural leases. Surplus lands not useful to DFG could potentially be sold back to interested parties.

Mr. Feliz addressed several issues discussed in the Assurances section of the Management Strategy.

- With regard to water for private wetlands, he stated that there needs to be a reliable supply of water for the adjacent duck hunting clubs. DFG will help insure the supply (for example, through Glide Tule Ranch) and share the operation and maintenance costs as is currently done with the Los Rios ditch system. He also noted that DFG will not transfer water out of Yolo County.
- Regarding safe harbor agreements, DFG hopes to expand the MOU to include the newly acquired lands.
- DFG also plans to maintain a realistic perspective on agricultural use; although the Bypass is a "tough place to farm," DFG will maintain all existing leases until the management plan is in place. Ultimately, agricultural activity will remain as another management tool.
- A hunting program will be maintained on the newly acquired lands that will include hunting of upland game and waterfowl.
- Fishing and other public uses will be maintained.
- The state will pay Yolo County in lieu property fees equivalent to current property taxes.
- Lastly, Mr. Feliz stressed that a management plan for the newly acquired lands will be developed by DFG and that the Working Group will be the forum to include the voice of the local landowners and stakeholders.

Mr. Fulster asked if the land purchase transaction had been completed.

Mr. Kilkenny said he thinks the purchase is a good thing but that the Working Group is supposed to be notified about such things. He further stated that he and others have attended these meetings for 2 years and have been led to believe that they were to be kept aware of such situations. He is concerned and wanted to have it on record that such a situation as conducted by the State on this land purchase seems to invalidate the whole stakeholder process.

Mr. Ceppos said that he had been contacted by a few other members of the Working Group who also expressed concern and disappointment about not having been notified of the transaction.

On a different topic, Mr. Mohr asked if DFG expects the 1986 flood levels to be exceeded.

Mr. Feliz said there is no way to know the answer to that question.

Mr. Ceppos noted that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' environmental documents for the Lower American River and Folsom Dam reoperations projects are out and that they supply information on this topic.

Mr. Wright noted that the expansion for flood capacity won't be locked in and that the potential for an increase is always there.

Mr. Hennelly stated that the California Waterfowl Association supports the acquisition and offered support to DFG.

Mr. Egan expressed concern about trespassing by the public into nearby private lands.

Mr. Feliz responded that the boundaries for the Wildlife Area will be clearly marked and that DFG would work toward increasing DFG personnel to enforce trespass laws.

The Nature Conservancy's Role in the Yolo Bypass Land Acquisition

Mr. Unkel of TNC provided background information on the events leading up to the land acquisition by the state. He explained that there is a big difference between land use allocation and land use acquisition. Land acquisition is a private process. Also, in this case, the landowner required discretion. Initially, TNC was interested in acquiring the Glide Jepson Prairie property, which contains key wildlife habitat. TNC representatives had made approaches and had discussions with the Glide family about this property since 1990. Upon the death of 2 Glide family property owners, all of the Glide properties went to the Glide Foundation. Then when Peggy Colby (the last owner) passed away, the heirs decided to sell property that included 4 ranches: the Wilcox, Giverson, Tule, and Causeway ranches.

Russell White, the representative of the Glide Foundation, rejected the initial TNC offer to purchase the properties. A land developer then offered 25 million dollars and received a 6-

Ms. Perkins asked what the geographic scope of the modeling would be.

Mr. Lek said that it would encompass the entire Bypass. Mr. Hardesty and Mr. Harvey stated a concern about what is meant by the "entire Bypass."

Mr. Ceppos suggested the Mr. Lek talk to Mr. Harvey and Mr. Hardesty about the modeling scope. He continued his discussion of the direction of the Working Group by noting that CALFED has funded a socioeconomic study related to changes in land use in the Bypass. This and other issues identified in the Management Strategy document will be the topic of many more Working Group meetings. Mr. Ceppos then asked Mr. Feliz to discuss the Wildlife Area management plan.

Yolo Wildlife Area Expansion Management Planning Process

Mr. Feliz explained that the opinions of the Working Group will be included in the management plan document and that these opinions will be considered prior to going through the CEQA process. Also, the progress of the project will be reported to the Reclamation Board, the Yolo County supervisors, and the Working Group. The plan may be organized by elements or biological units and will specify goals. For example, one goal of the waterfowl element might be to increase nesting mallards. Some of the public use elements will be hunting, wildlife viewing, public tours and trails, education programs, and fishing. Some of the management elements are wetlands, agricultural leases, and new headquarters for the Glide Tule Ranch. As part of the management plan project, specific goals for these and other elements will be established.

Mr. Fulster asked what percentage of the newly acquired lands will be kept in farming and opened for hunting.

Mr. Feliz said that agricultural fields will continue to be an important source of food for waterfowl and other wildlife, but the percentage of land to be kept in agricultural use is not yet determined. Likewise, hunting will be allowed but the percentage of land to be designated for hunting isn't established yet. He said that DFG needs to know where the landowners want the closed lands to be located so as not to impact the duck clubs.

Mr. Hennelly asked if the new Wildlife Area lands would be affected by the 60/40 hunting use split as mandated at the federal level.

Mr. Feliz responded that there are no strict regulations on state lands as there are on federal lands.

Mr. Hardesty asked how DFG plans to deal with outbreaks of avian cholera

Mr. Feliz responded that DFG takes the lead on addressing outbreaks of cholera in the Delta, including cleanup on private lands.

Mr. Feliz said they are assigned to specific regions and are not supervised by himself. They work for the Wildlife Protection Branch. He said additional refuge staff that are not wardens are also helpful. They don't make arrests, but do take down information and make reports about problems that need law enforcement attention. Wardens will be in the vicinity on most hunt days.

Mr. Hardesty asked if all land acquired is in the Bypass.

Mr. Feliz said he thought that roughly 12,000 acres are inside and that fewer than 1,000 acres are outside.

Mr. Hardesty asked if anyone knows if there was a price difference between the 2 locations.

Ms. Perkins commented that DFG staff won't be aware of actual acreages and land costs until after close of escrow.

Mr. Fulster said he understood that \$1,330 per acre was paid for the Glide property. Mr. Feliz said he doesn't think property outside the Bypass sells for more than property inside the Bypass.

Mr. Kearney asked if mineral rights will be obtained in the sale.

Mr. Feliz said they would not. Mr. Ceppos told the group that he and Robin will send each member a questionnaire with a list of issues already identified as needing to be addressed. The questionnaire will also ask for issues for discussion not already on the list, and for input on logistics such as meeting times. The information gathered from the questionnaire will set the stage for future meetings.

Mr. Ceppos adjourned the meeting.