



Reach 2B Landowners Meeting
 November 14, 2011, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
 Kings River Conservation District
 4886 East Jensen Avenue, Fresno

Meeting Summary

Attendees:

Eric Abrahamsen	Provost & Pritchard
Robert Brewer	Mitigation Lands Trust
Roy Catania	Paramount Farms
Ane Deister	Cardno ENTRIX
Alexis Phillips Dowell	Department of Water Resources
Dave Encinas	Department of Water Resources
Greg Farley	Department of Water Resources
Seth Gentzler	URS Corp.
Steve Haugen	Kings River Conservation District
Randy Houk	Columbia Canal Company
Shannon Leonard	URS Corp.
Clifton Lollar	Kings River Water Association
Louie Long	Kings River Water Association
Bill Luce	Friant Water Authority
Mari Martin	Resources Management Coalition
Craig Moyle	MWH
Don Peracchi	DJP Farms
Paul Romero	Department of Water Resources
Kristi Sandberg	Reclamation
Steve Stadler	Kings River Conservation District
Jim Stillwell	Logoluso Farms
Vu Thai	Department of Water Resources
Steve Tighe	Reclamation
Annie Wagner	Department of Water Resources
Bill Ward	BB Limited
Mike Widhalm	Paramount Farms

Attendance via Conference Line:

Kimberly Brown	Paramount Farms
Krystal M. Chojnacki	City of Mendota

Note: This workshop was formatted to encourage interactive discussions and information exchanges between landowners, landowner representatives, and the Program team. These notes are intended to give a general summary of information exchange among these participants.

Introductions, Meeting Objectives and Agenda

Seth Gentzler opened the meeting with introductions and the group reviewed the agenda. The primary purposes of the meeting were to: review and discuss project effects on Mendota Pool and other operations, present details of project components, discuss project effects on infrastructure using large-scale maps, and discuss future meeting dates and topics of interest to the group.

Overview of Alternatives

Seth Gentzler and Paul Romero summarized the four alternatives for the project and explained the major element for each.

Questions by participants:

Q: Will there still be a fish screen on the Compact Bypass if the North/South canal option is used?

A: Yes. There will also be a fish screen if the North/South Canal option is not used.

Q: Will we have a hard timeline for the project soon?

A: A schedule is anticipated within the next couple of months.

Q: Why don't you want more detailed information now?

A: We are not at that level of design yet and need a preferred alternative first, but any additional information landowners want to give now is welcome and will be helpful as we move forward. Additional meetings will be conducted as we start refining designs.

Q: Can you talk about how the system will operate under various conditions and maintenance responsibilities?

A: We should be able to cover those issues either at this meeting or a future meeting.

Overview of Existing Pool Operations and Infrastructure

DWR summarized the Program's understanding of the Mendota Pool operations and requested feedback from the landowners for further clarification.

Questions by participants:

Q: If there is 1,300 cubic feet per second (cfs) flood flows from the SJR, how is the water routed and where does it go?

A: Water can be absorbed or can go downstream depending on demand. There is up to about 1,500 cfs capacity in the slide gates at Mendota Dam, but it can be tough to pull the boards at that flow so the Central California Irrigation District (CCID) starts pulling boards earlier if higher flows are expected. It takes a couple of hours to pull the boards out of Mendota Dam for SJR flooding. The preference is to use the Chowchilla Bypass if there is no demand in the Mendota Pool, so CCID can avoid impacting Mendota Pool operations and sending water down Reach 3 and 4A. During any Kings River flood releases, a majority of the boards are pulled at Mendota Dam. The Mendota Pool is usually operated to keep the water surface the same with boards out by only pulling the boards necessary to pass the flow and maintain deliveries from the pool.

- Q:** What are the maximum Kings River flows to Fresno Slough?
- A:** First 4,750 cfs goes north to Mendota Pool and the rest goes south. When south capacities are exceeded, excess flows are split 50/50. In 1969, the 30-day maximum in Fresno Slough was 5,900 cfs.
- Q:** What is the purpose of the City of Mendota intake?
- A:** River intake pumps are used to exchange water to the pool with the water taken from the water well.
- Q:** When do Big and Little Bertha operate?
- A:** These pumps pull water out of the SJR, not the Mendota Pool. They only pull water when floodwater is coming down the SJR and have capacities of 15 and 25 cfs.
- Q:** What is the pump at Bend 10 [12]?
- A:** It is a seepage pump and will likely need to be removed same as the noted Columbia Canal Company seepage pump. They are not needed if the land is acquired.
- Q:** Where and when do Farmers Water District Pool pump-ins occur?
- A:** Farmers Water District (Mendota Pool Group) pump-ins discharge to the river from May to June and October to December and they get credit for the exchange.

Overview of Proposed Pool Operations and Infrastructure

DWR summarized how each of the alternatives would impact existing infrastructure and generally how those impacts would be handled.

Compact Bypass Channel

Questions by participants:

- Q:** What are you planning to do with the Mendota wells?
- A:** There are three options – avoid them, keep them inside the levees and flood proof, or relocate outside levees. Wells need to be accessible for maintenance 24/7, 365 days per year. Access will need to be for both equipment and pedestrians.
- Q:** What are you planning to do with the Big and Little Bertha pumps? Would we re-plumb to the new pool under the bypass alternative?
- A:** Paramount expects no impacts to how they operate; where they currently pump into Pomona Canal from the SJR. If there are no impacts, Paramount is open to options.
- Q:** Would you screen the Big and Little Bertha pumps?
- A:** Options are to screen and lower the elevation or to move the inlet to the modified Mendota Pool.

Fresno Slough Dam

Questions by participants:

- Q:** Would the new Pool change in elevation?
- A:** The new pool would be at the same elevation as the existing Mendota Pool. Staff-gage elevation 14.5 feet used to be the maximum stage for pool operations but was reduced to 14.1 feet due to DWR Division of Safety of Dams regulations due to existing dam condition and subsidence impacts. Any new dam would need to be designed for 14.5 feet.
- Q:** Would the Corps require modifications to levees on the Fresno Slough?
- A:** Reclamation and DWR have not yet looked into this. Danny Wade (Tranquility Irrigation District) or Chris White may have historical studies and survey information on the levees along Fresno Slough. DWR may also have surveys of the levees. Some surveys are planned in the pool while it is empty.

Q: What would be the backwater effects from Kings and SJ rivers if the pool is smaller because of lower storage and this would affect levees?

A: Some participants felt the effects would be considerable, but others thought there would only be a minor impact. One property owner was particularly concerned about the effects to their property and operations; this person believes the new conditions would be worse than present.

Paul stated that DWR will need to evaluate the impact of attenuation on shortening the pool.

Q: What is the maximum flow capacity needed at the dam design?

A: Some felt that 6,000 cfs from Fresno Slough could be exceeded, but no one was sure about the capacity of the Fresno Slough channel.

There are currently capacity issues at 4,100 cfs but those are from seepage and not necessarily overtopping. There is a significant drop (6-12 inches) in the Fresno Slough water surface elevations (during flooding) at the Mowry Bridge.

Technical Details of the Project Elements

DWR summarized the general design for each of the major project elements.

San Mateo

The crossing consists of box culverts up to 1,500 cfs, and it would then overtop. The crossing can be gated on both sides and this was confirmed with Madera County. The spring pulse and flood flows would be the only impassible periods.

Questions by participants:

Q: Does the design provide an all-weather road between the culverts and levees? (This may be necessary to its use outside of the inundated period.)

A: The road surfacing material has not yet been designed.

Road 10 ½

The design reroutes the roadway along the proposed bypass channel levees and across the bypass control structure to allow access to the existing dam on the Madera side.

Questions by participants:

Q: Can the crossing handle a 25 ton crane?

A: The control structure is designed for HS-20 loading.

Q: Can you gate it off where it turns from existing alignment and make it a private access?

A: Madera County believes it has the right-of-way all the way to the dam, but DWR will talk to the county about it.

Fresno Slough Dam

Questions by participants:

Q: How will the new dam be accessed?

A: The proposed dam access road will cross the relocated Main Canal from Bass Ave.

Q: How will private property access be maintained over Fresno Slough?

A: The Mowry Bridge will remain. The landowner commented that he would like upgraded access because the bridge has weight limitations. If he can use the dam as a crossing, that would be acceptable access. DWR needs to see of using the proposed dam to cross Fresno Slough is an option.

Q: Does the new dam need to have slide gates (as in the new MD design) to allow more precise releases over just having radial gates?

A: The dam will need to release in increments down to 25 and 50 cfs. DWR will need to see if the radial gates can provide this flexibility for operations.

Q: Why do you need a fish barrier at the proposed dam?

A: To prevent fish from getting into Fresno Slough when gates are open (flood releases).

Columbia Canal

Questions by participants:

Q: Are there comments on the realignment for the point of diversion?

A: For the Fresno Slough Dam alternative, the Columbia Canal (CC) alignment on the Fresno County side may cause issues for drainage on the BB Limited property. An underground pipeline all the way to the CC siphon would be preferred.

Q: How will the existing pumps on BB Limited property be addressed?

A: Details have not been developed on that yet.

Q: Could we add capacity to CC for Big and Little Bertha pumps instead of screening or rerouting them?

A: DWR will look into this option.

Helm and Main Canal Relocations

Questions by participants:

Q: Are there any issues with the inlet being so close to the DMC?

A: There is potential for water quality impacts due to the lack of mixing.

Q: Would there be any water rights issues with moving intakes?

A: The Program is looking at water rights.

North/South and Short Canals

The North and South Canals could be used to deliver for either bypass alternative. They could be lined or unlined 100 to 250-foot bottom width. Floodplain levee alignment would be modified at intake.

Questions by participants:

Q: Why are there 2 alignments?

A: A cost-benefit analysis is being done to take into account effects to sensitive habitat adjacent to Fresno Slough.

Q: Can the Short Canal be placed on the west side of the Fresno Slough Dam?

A: This can be looked into.

Q: How will you maintain ability for diversions at Lone Willow Slough?

A: It will be screened.

Q: You would remove the Chowchilla structure?

A: On the river side in order to eliminate a structure on the river.

Q: Pool pump-ins for Farmers WD: could this canal be used?

A: Yes.

Q: Why not locate the bifurcation structure lower in the river?

A: There needs to be enough head to maintain capacity for diversion but we can look at this more closely for next meeting.

Q: Can you look into the ability to take water out at the Farmers Irrigation Ditch instead of building a whole new canal?

A: DWR will look into this.

Q: For the Short Canal, how will CCC get access to the new CC pumps at an intake in Fresno County?
(Can't take equipment across the old Mendota Dam.)

A: DWR needs to look into options for daily access ability.

Q: How will Farmers WD supply the pool with the Short Canal?

A: DWR needs to consider this. Baker also has 3 pump-ins directly into the river, which are not connected to the existing system.

Relocations

Questions by participants:

Q: How will groundwater wells be accessed?

A: Groundwater wells for the City of Mendota and Farmers WD/Aliso WD (which rely on groundwater) need access 24/7, so floodproofing is not an option. Keeping the wells within the Farmers WD area should be okay.

Q: Any flood proofed wells that need 24/7 access will require all-weather roads. Would this result in fish habitat or passage issues?

A: This is a possibility; DWR will need to look into the best way to address the wells.

Levees

To identify the levee design and how to address stability and seepage measures, we need to test the soils. Exploration would include holes every 1 mile to start and then maybe every, 1,000 feet after alignment is identified.

Questions by participants:

Q: Why not use interceptor drains instead of seepage channel?

A: It's an option, but we are using the larger footprint for impacts assessment. Interceptor drains will be an option.

Q: Why the road next to the levee?

A: The operations road may not be needed if we have one on top of levee, but wanted to capture the largest footprint.

Borrow

Potential borrow area shown on the map is about 1,000 acres, but we only need about 200 acres. The extra acreage is to cover any potential sites for the environmental document. Some test pits already have been dug on the Fresno County side.

Questions by participants:

Q: What are the criteria for borrow material?

A: It depends on what we find but clays are best.

Q: Are you finding appropriate soils?

A: So far our geologist says what he has seen may work, but more testing needs to be done. In the next month or so, we should have a better idea of what the levee details will look like.

Q: Recent work on the Chowchilla Bypass trucked material in from the Almond Restaurant. Can this be a source of borrow? Does this indicate there are no appropriate soils in the area?

A: DWR will check on the reason for this.

Q: How do you handle the borrow lands?

A: The Program will acquire lands needed and will work with landowners on how to treat the pits once the work is done, if lands are to revert back to the original owner.

Q: Why not place pits inside the levees for fish?

A: Borrow areas inside levees may also be used, but pits inside the levees will need to address preventing predator habitat.

Structures

Questions by participants:

Q: Is there enough head at the Compact Bypass bifurcations structure for the fish screen?

A: The hydraulics are very complex, but we have run the hydraulics to verify it's workable.

Q: How do you get water to the pool at low restoration flows?

A: Since the pool elevation may be higher than the water elevation in the river, we will have to operate the river structure to equalize the head in the river to gain necessary head.

Q: Does the Flood Operations Manual need reworking?

A: Environmental documents say the Program won't affect flood operations, but some restoration flow changes will be accounted for, and Reclamation will evaluate how to handle it.

Q: Will the screens handle all native species?

A: No, these are designed only for juvenile salmon, but because of the size juvenile salmon, some other native fish (steelhead) may be covered.

Q: What are the barriers for?

A: They are designed to move adults to the correct path.

Q: What size? Does it include steelhead?

A: Adults and yes.

Discussion about Future Meetings and Location:

Everyone agreed that the meeting format was good, and could be used at the next meeting. Topics for future discussion include follow-up on action items and the draft Project Description. The date of the next meeting was discussed, and a date after the holidays, probably late January (23rd) is preferred. Some stakeholders would like to see an administrative draft of the Project Description before a public draft is distributed. URS will check on this with Reclamation.

Breakout Session with Maps

DWR/URS met with landowners to discuss details regarding infrastructure. Maps were marked up with specific details provided by individual landowners. An unknown issue with Farmers Irrigation District pipeline and discharge points was identified. It was suggested that showing each alternative and option on a separate map would make it easier to understand, as well as including Tranquility and James Irrigation Districts if there will be effects to flood elevations along Fresno Slough or changes in sedimentation patterns.

Follow-up Actions:

- URS/DWR will develop a firm timeline and provide to landowners at a future meeting.
- Reclamation will need to address operations and maintenance for proposed structures and levees and provide some information to landowners in future meetings.
- DWR needs to determine how to address the Farmers WD pump-ins.
- For the FSD, DWR will need to look into the reservoir routing of the Pool during floods and check the design head for FSD.

- DWR/URS will need to further evaluate the project's impacts on levees in Fresno Slough.
- DWR will need to discuss with Division of Safety of Dams the necessary design flow for FSD.
- URS to provide detailed description of duration and frequency of overtopping at San Mateo at the next landowner meeting.
- DWR/URS to look at the need to provide an all-weather surface on San Mateo extension road.
- Reclamation is looking into water rights issues related to points of diversion.
- URS/DWR needs to evaluate potential water quality issues associated with Main Canal inlet relocations near the Delta Mendota Canal.
- DWR needs to evaluate pressure pipe and drainage issues for the CC realignment.
- DWR needs to address relocation of Big and Little Bertha pumps.
- DWR will assess the possibility of moving the North/South Canal bifurcation structure further downstream in the river.
- DWR needs to look into moving the North/South Canal to take out near the Farmers WD Irrigation Ditch.
- DWR will investigate moving the Short Canal to the west side of the Fresno Slough Dam.
- DWR will look into access issues for the CC pumps.
- URS needs to ensure that interceptor drains are an option in the environmental document for seepage management.
- DWR to present update on borrow areas at next landowner meeting.
- URS will check with Reclamation about distributing an admin draft of the Project Description to the landowners.