Focus Group Primer

Lead Agency:

SOUTHEAST SACRAMENTO COUNTY AGRICULTURAL WATER AUTHORITY

Study Partners:

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY
EAST BAY MUNICIPAL UTILITY DISTRICT
SACRAMENTO COUNTY WATER AGENCY
SACRAMENTO AREA FLOOD CONTROL AGENCY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS
SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT
RECLAMATION DISTRICT 800

January 2006
Study Partners

The Nature Conservancy
Cosumnes River Preserve
13501 Franklin Boulevard
Galt CA 95632

East Bay Municipal Utility District
1 Winemaker Way, Unit K
Lodi CA 95240

Sacramento County Water Agency
827 7th Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency
1007 7th Street, 7th Floor
Sacramento CA 95814

University of California, Davis
The Center for Integrated Watershed Science and Management
Department of Geology

San Joaquin County Resource Conservation District
3422 W. Hammer Lane, Suite A
Stockton CA 95219

Reclamation District 800
PO Box 115
Elk Grove CA 95759-0115

Larry J. Rodriguez
Director of Water Resources
916.714.1806
Email: larry@robertson-bryan.com

Brook Edwards
Restoration Ecologists
916.714.8351
Email: brook@robertson-bryan.com
Cosumnes & Mokelumne Rivers
Floodplain Integrated Resources Management Plan

Focus Group Primer

Lead Agency:
Southeast Sacramento County Agricultural Water Authority
P.O. Box 445
Heald, California 95638

Robertson-Bryan, Inc.
Specializing In Water and Power Resources
9888 Kent Street
Elk Grove, California 95624

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Congratulations! As a **Focus Group** member for the Cosumnes and Mokelumne Rivers Floodplain Integrated Resources Management Plan you are representing your neighbors and your community in a collaborative effort to improve flood management, to improve riparian habitat for native wildlife, and to encourage groundwater recharge. This **primer** was developed to give you the information needed to fulfill your responsibilities as a focus group member.

**INTRODUCTION**

The Cosumnes and Mokelumne Rivers Floodplain Integrated Resources Management Plan (**IRMP**) is a local multi-partner effort to develop a management strategy to enhance floodplain conditions and functions of the lower Cosumnes and the Mokelumne. This management strategy will identify specific floodplain management actions that have been reviewed by the focus groups, local stakeholders, and local agencies. This strategy will:

- Improve flood management and reduce flood damage to structures, levees, and agriculture
- Protect and enhance floodplain, riparian, and riverine ecosystems
- Increase groundwater recharge in the floodplain

**PRIMER (noun)** - a small introductory book on a subject.

Funding for the IRMP is provided through a grant from the CALFED Bay-Delta Program.

The CALFED Bay-Delta Program is a balanced, comprehensive approach to reduce conflicts over limited water supplies. The Program's four objectives are:

1. Levee System Integrity
2. Water Supply Reliability
3. Water Quality
4. Ecosystem Restoration
Study Partners & Oversight Committee

IRMP study partners are organizations that have a role in managing floodplain resources of the lower Cosumnes and Mokelumne rivers.

The IRMP study partners are:

- SSCAWA – Southeast Sacramento County Agricultural Water Authority
- SCWA – Sacramento County Water Agency
- EBMUD – East Bay Municipal Utility District
- SAFCA – Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency
- TNC – The Nature Conservancy
- SAFCA – Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency
- SJCRCD – San Joaquin County Resource Conservation District
- RD 800 – Reclamation District 800
- UCD – Center for Integrated Watershed Management – University of California, Davis

The study partners have chosen representatives from each of their organizations to form an Oversight Committee (Committee) for the project. This Committee serves as the decision-making body for the IRMP and has the responsibility to ensure that the IRMP will meet project goals and objectives.

Focus Groups

Stakeholder participation is critical to the development and success of the IRMP. Focus groups comprised of local stakeholders will work with the Oversight Committee to help guide the overall study process. Three focus groups will be formed—one for each study area reach.

Specifically, focus groups will:

- Develop reach-specific objectives and management actions
- Review work products
- Make recommendations to the Oversight Committee on proposed management strategies for specific river reaches

Focus Group Primer

Persons, agencies, groups, or other interested parties both inside and outside the floodplain who have an interest in management of the floodplain.
**IRMP GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The Oversight Committee determined that two levels of objectives are needed to address the resource management issues in the IRMP study area. 

**First** level objectives are **program-level guiding statements** and include a vision statement, goals, and objectives. These guiding statements apply to all three study area reaches.

### Vision Statement

To develop a management strategy that facilitates effective enhancement of floodplain conditions and functions of the lower Cosumnes and Mokelumne rivers.

### Program-Level Guiding Statements

#### GOALS

- Develop a plan to guide implementation of prioritized management actions that will effectively enhance floodplain and riparian habitats, flood management, and groundwater recharge along the lower Cosumnes and Mokelumne rivers.
- Engage stakeholders in the development of an Integrated Resource Management Plan (Plan)
- Utilize the principles of adaptive management in Plan development and implementation.

#### OBJECTIVES

- Develop a public outreach program that will inform, engage, and seek feedback from local stakeholder groups and landowners within the study area.
- Identify and organize focus groups composed of local stakeholders having expertise or interest for each river reach of the study area.
- Develop a prioritization model that facilitates selection of opportunities for enhancement, consistent with the project’s goals and objectives, and that will remain functional and adaptable to future conditions.
- Identify opportunities to protect and enhance floodplain, riparian, and riverine ecosystems.
- Identify opportunities to improve flood management and reduce flood damage to structures, levees, and agriculture.
- Identify opportunities to increase groundwater recharge associated with the floodplains.
Second level objectives are **reach-specific guiding statements**, and include reach-specific objectives and management actions. Using their knowledge of specific river reaches, focus groups will develop and refine reach-specific guiding statements.

**Reach-Specific Guiding Statements**

Reach-specific guiding statements, which include reach-specific objectives and management actions, will be developed either by using goals and objectives from other management programs in the reach or through a collaborate decision making process within the focus group.

**Reach-Specific Objectives**

Reach-specific objectives define the range of desired outcomes needed to achieve objectives within the opportunities and constraints of specific river reaches. The collective achievement of all reach-specific objectives is the means by which program-level objectives are achieved.

**Management Actions**

A management action defines a specific “on the ground” measure to be implemented as a means of achieving one or more reach-specific objectives. Implementation of prioritized Management Actions, under the principals of adaptive management, will be facilitated by the IRMP. Focus groups will develop management actions that are specific, measurable, action oriented, relevant, and time focused (SMART).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Focus Group Tasks</strong></th>
<th><strong>Schedule</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop reach-specific objectives that define the range of desired outcomes and achieve the project level goals and objectives.</td>
<td>January-February 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop management actions that define specific “on-the-ground” measures that will be implemented as a means of achieving one or more objectives. Management actions will be measurable, action oriented, relevant, and time focused actions (SMART).</td>
<td>April 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop ranking criteria (weighting factors) for management actions to prioritize restoration activities. Ranking will be based on how well an individual or group of management actions satisfy the objectives of the IRMP.</td>
<td>May 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review and comment on Draft IRMP.</td>
<td>November 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review and comment on Programmatic EIR.</td>
<td>March 2007</td>
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**Focus Group Primer**
PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Cosumnes and Mokelumne Rivers are vital components in the development and implementation of long-term comprehensive plans to enhance ecological health and improve water management for beneficial uses of the Bay-Delta. The floodplains are important contributors to California’s agricultural economy and are important habitat for a number of significant riparian and upland wildlife species.

The Central Valley’s agricultural economy has been harmed by flooding. The 1997 flood forced widespread evacuation, disrupted regional transportation, and caused an estimated $35 million in damage. Developing strategies to enhance the natural floodplain capacity in conjunction with surrounding land uses could substantially alleviate the flood damages that have occurred because of inadequate levee maintenance, chronic levee failure, and limited channel capacity.

By allowing floodwaters to spread out in selected floodplain areas through engineered levee outlets or with setback levees, the flood stage in the river will be reduced, water velocities that promote channel incision and levee destabilization will be reduced, and groundwater recharge from the floodplain will be increased.

The vegetation along the rivers is a broad and diverse array of habitat types that are critical to native fish and wildlife, and include riparian forest, emergent marsh, oak woodland, open grasslands, vernal pools, and seasonal wetlands. The habitats found in the lower portions of both rivers, especially at their confluence, supports some of the most significant valley floodplain forests and wetlands remaining in the Central Valley.

Geographic Scope

The IRMP study area is the Cosumnes and Mokelumne floodplains—an area generally defined by FEMA as the 100-year flood boundary. The study area is approximately 61,787 acres of floodplain in Sacramento and San Joaquin counties. The Cosumnes floodplain comprises 75%, or 46,504 acres, of the study area, and the Mokelumne floodplain is the remaining 25%, or 15,282 acres.

Because of the significant physical and biological differences between river reaches, the IRMP study area was divided into three reaches:

- Cosumnes Reach
- Confluence Reach
- Mokelumne Reach

Each reach has a unique set of management issues and opportunities for floodplain management activities.
The following sections are brief summaries from the IRMP’s Floodplain Resources Characterization Report. Please refer to this report for a complete discussion of the issues.

**Cosumnes Reach**

The Cosumnes Reach extends from Dillard Road (RM 27.5) downstream to Highway 99 (RM 11). Deer Creek runs parallel to the river and converges with the Cosumnes just upstream of Highway 99. The floodplain, which is ½–1 mile wide, slopes toward Deer Creek. The floodplain is approximately 43% native vegetation, 52% agriculture, and 5% urban. Most of the native vegetation occurs along the outer boundaries of the floodplain, while agriculture occupies the central floodplain between the Cosumnes and Deer Creek.

Flows in the Cosumnes River range from dry during the summer to floods in the winter. The Cosumnes River can contain flows of 30,000 to 40,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) because it has high levees and it is deeply incised. There is little opportunity for channel migration or for floodplain inundation except in the event of a catastrophic levee failure.

In 1997 the Cosumnes River had a peak flow of 93,000 cfs, which is the 150-year flood (recurrence interval flow). There were nine levee breaks that caused substantial damage to levees, crops, roads, and buildings.

The floodplain is further constrained by multiple bridge crossings that have changed channel morphology by constricting the river and altering its natural drainage pattern.

The Folsom South Canal runs perpendicular to the floodplain on a raised levee that constrains the floodplain to Deer Creek. Similarly, the Wilton Road Bridge decreases the channel width and channel capacity and diverts high flows from the river channel into the Wilton Bypass and then into Deer Creek.

To lessen the impact of future floods, alternative methods of flood control that could be integrated with groundwater recharge and habitat enhancement activities should be explored. For example, engineered levee outlets placed at specific locations would allow flows to spread out into the floodplain before catastrophic levee failures cause damage to agriculture and private property.
Confluence Reach

The Confluence Reach includes the lower Cosumnes River from Highway 99 (RM 11) downstream to the Mokelumne confluence and upstream along the Mokelumne to New Hope Road (RM 25.6).

Much of this reach is in the Cosumnes River Preserve, where the river has better access to the floodplain as compared to the other study reaches. This reach is comprised of approximately 42% native vegetation, 56% agriculture, and 2% urban. Most of the native vegetation is on Cosumnes River Preserve land east of the Cosumnes. Agriculture occupies the floodplain west of the Cosumnes and most of the Mokelumne floodplain.

In the Confluence Reach, the Cosumnes and Mokelumne are both tidally influenced. The Cosumnes is characterized by multiple flow channels, few levees, and a wide floodplain that is regularly inundated. The Mokelumne is isolated from its historic floodplain by levees on both sides of the river.

Controlled levee breaches at several locations on the right bank of the Cosumnes River within the Preserve (RM 2.8–3.8) allow floodwaters to inundate approximately 275 acres of floodplain in most years.

The Confluence Reach has more land under protection compared to other reaches because of the combined efforts of TNC and the Cosumnes River Preserve partners—the Bureau of Land Management, California Department of Fish and Game, Department of Water Resources, Ducks Unlimited, Sacramento County, and the State Lands Commission. Private land under conservation easements are also an important component to the protected lands of the Cosumnes River Preserve. Lands protected by these different organizations total approximately 11,570 acres. As a consequence, this reach has many opportunities for enhancement of floodplain habitats, flood management, and groundwater recharge.

RM – river mile
River mile numbers increase from downstream to upstream.
Cosumnes RM 0 is the confluence with the Mokelumne.
Mokelumne RM 0 is the confluence with the San Joaquin River.
Mokelumne Reach

The Mokelumne Reach extends from Camanche Dam (RM 63.8) downstream to New Hope Road (RM 25.6). Compared to the floodplains of the Cosumnes or Confluence reaches, the Mokelumne floodplain is relatively narrow. Even though the river corridor is severely constricted by levees, it is the regulation of river flows by Camanche Dam that reduces the extent of the floodplain. Bridges also constrict the floodplain by changing the channel morphology and altering its natural drainage pattern.

Agriculture occupies the majority of the Mokelumne floodplain, covering approximately 71%, with 24% native vegetation and 4% urban comprising the remaining areas. Most of the native vegetation is in recreational areas and idle lands.

Under normal operating conditions flows released from Camanche Reservoir are between 300 cfs and 2,500 cfs. The current levee system can contain flows up to 5,000 cfs, which limits opportunities for floodplain inundation and groundwater recharge.

Therefore, most opportunities for floodplain habitat enhancement will either be wildlife habitat enhancement projects, such as –

- Revegetation
- riparian buffer creation/extension
- invasive weed removal

or aquatic habitat enhancement projects such as –

- gravel enhancement
- secondary channel creation
NOTES