

## Feather River RFMP Input for Conservations Strategy Advisory Committee

**Purpose.** The purpose of this paper is to advance the development of projects presented in the Feather River Regional Flood Management Plan (RFMP) to achieve the goals of the 2017 update to the CVFPP. An over-arching goal of the Feather River Region is to demonstrate the nexus—and promote the compatibility—of agriculture, flood management, and ecological values. This paper summarizes a vision for achieving these multi-benefit goals.

**Economic and Community Sustainability as the Basis for Environmental Benefit.** The sustainability of the local community is highly reliant on agriculture and the working landscape, which is interdependent with recreational fish and wildlife uses and provides the skilled labor force transferable from farming to habitat cultivation as well as the economic justification to improve the flood management system. The Feather River RFMP generally lists flood-focused projects with an approach to how they can be developed into multi-benefit projects. The list of projects is included as attachment A, and the approach to developing these projects into multi-benefit projects is outlined in Chapter 6. The primary emphasis is on achieving ecological objectives in conjunction and compatible with agriculture wherever possible through land use, cropping types and patterns, timing of activities, and other land management measures. The RFMP cites specific examples of how to accomplish this to substantial effect; however, some of the Conservation Strategy (CS) Measurable Objectives will not be fully achievable solely through asking each unit of farmland to double-duty as a unit of habitat. Chapter 6 of the RFMP provides the following recommendations where avoidance of land conversion from primary agricultural use to primary habitat use is not possible.

- Compensate landowners directly affected by conversion of agricultural land either through direct purchase of the land or by purchasing other farm land for the impacted property owner. Compensation should include consideration for long-term loss of production income, as well as the immediate value of the agricultural land.
- Consider mitigating the loss of farmland by making agricultural improvements on “potential prime agricultural lands” identified by local jurisdictions, as is proposed by SACOG in its 2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy.
- Consider mitigating the loss of farmland by purchasing agricultural easements from willing sellers managed according to wildlife-friendly principles to offset any losses of agricultural habitat due to floodway modification/expansion.

**Concepts for Multi-Benefit Projects.** Section 6.3.2 identifies approaches to making flood management actions multi-benefit. These include:

- Incorporating Biotechnical Bank Protection along Existing Levees to Reduce River Erosion and Wave Energy Biotechnical
- Applying Levee Design Criteria that Promote Compatibility with Existing and Potential Floodway Habitats
- Planting Riparian Vegetation along Channel Banks to Help Prevent Channels Eroding into Levees
- Covering Rock Slopes or Rip-Rap Areas with Soil and Planting Native Grassland Species
- Disposing of Unusable Degrade Materials into Mounds in the Floodway
- Controlling the Spread of Invasive Plants

**Building on the LFRCMP.** Prior to the Feather River RFMP being developed, the Lower Feather River Corridor Management Plan (LFRCMP) was developed. The LFRCMP presented a long-term vision and multi-objective strategy for managing the 20-mile-long Feather River corridor between the Marysville and Yuba City urban areas in the north and the Sutter Bypass in the south. The LFRCMP provides a vision for how flood system maintenance and habitat enhancement can be integrated under long-term programmatic permits, as well as recommendations for optimizing future management, restoration, and maintenance of the corridor. It provides a planning tool and informational resource for flood managers at DWR and Local Maintaining Agencies, as well as resource agencies, environmental and recreation advocates, farmers, and the general public. The LFRCMP offers an approach that:

- Protects public safety by facilitating maintenance of flood management facilities.
- Conserves, enhances, and restores habitat and ecosystem functions.
- Supports agricultural productivity.
- Promotes economic sustainability and land use compatibility.
- Improves recreational opportunities

The Feather River Region proposes to use the LFRCMP as a template for creating a vision for how to achieve the flood management and CS measurable objectives for the region. The proposal would expand the footprint of the LFRCMP to include all the tributaries in the Feather River Region.

**Future Vision.** The intent of the vision is to further promote the compatibility of flood management, agriculture, and environmental values through facilitation and implementation of multi-benefit actions consistent with the CVFPP. Actions may include:

- Capital improvements to achieve flood management and ecological goals (i.e., constructed physical modifications of the system that can enhance flood safety and habitat value as part of the same project).
- O&M of the corridor that does not trigger project-specific or episodic compensatory habitat mitigation.
- Improvements that allow for more dynamic and naturalistic processes resulting in temporal and locational changes in river channel features and habitat, and a flexible accounting approach that recognizes change rather than static elements (e.g., shifting depositional areas that present seasonal floodplain habitat or cut-banks that allow for swallow habitat, where there is no increased flood risk).
- Establishing areas to preserve or enhance habitat which can function as compensatory mitigation for other actions.
- Per the LCRFMP, simplifying the regulatory permitting process for flood facility maintenance activities and other multi-benefit actions.