

**Meeting of the Central Valley Flood Protection Board
November 20, 2015**

BRIEFING SUMMARY

**Three Amigos Nonstructural Alternative Flood Management Project
San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge, Stanislaus County**

Staff will provide a brief status report to the Board on recent progress on the Three Amigos Nonstructural Alternative Flood Management Project. After several west side San Joaquin River levee breaches during the January 1997 floods, the Board, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) agreed to pursue implementation of a nonstructural alternative (NSA) at the Three Amigos site rather than repair the levees. The NSA would result in permanent connection between the river and the adjacent floodplain, and would provide wildlife habitat including several endangered species. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) purchased the floodplain lands in 1998 and added them to the San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). Three former Reclamation Districts (the "Three Amigos") have dissolved, and significant work has occurred to create/restore and maintain habitat.

In order to formalize the NSA, several administrative actions are required, including USACE purchase of flowage easements, USACE/USFWS Operations and Maintenance (O&M) agreement for refuge lands, USACE revision of its O&M Manual for flood control, Board dissolution of local O&M agreements, and a Board decision to quitclaim or retain existing flood control property rights. Staff will provide an update on the anticipated timing of these actions.

In addition, to ensure floodplain-river connectivity and sustainable habitat function on the refuge, it has become apparent that drainage off the refuge needs to be improved. USFWS proposes to install two gated pipes (72-inch pipes fitted with manually-operated slide gates) and replace 1-36 inch pipe at a prior breach site. This Ecosystem Restoration and Floodwater Attenuation (ERFA) Project will provide improved river-floodplain connectivity for over 2,500 acres of restored floodplain habitat along the west side of the San Joaquin River between its confluence with the Tuolumne River and Highway 132. This project will ensure proper inflow and drainage that preserve and support wildlife habitat values at the Refuge. The ERFA is funded by a Department of Water Resources (DWR) Proposition 13 grant awarded to River Partners.

River Partners submitted an application on behalf of the USFWS on November 2, 2015 for a Board encroachment permit to construct the proposed ERFA project. DWR circulated a draft Initial Study / Negative Declaration (IS/ND) for public review and comment for a period of 30 days starting on November 13, 2015. Written comments must be received no later than the close of business (5:00pm) on December 13, 2015. The draft IS/ND may be viewed at:

http://www.water.ca.gov/floodmgmt/fpo/sgb/fpcp/prop84/comp_sol/2008_selections/alist_projects/

Staff are coordinating with DWR, USACE, USFWS and River Partners to expedite application review so that a permit may be considered at the December 18, 2015 Board meeting.

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