

Central Valley Flood Protection Board Meeting
February 26, 2016

INFORMATIONAL BRIEFING

**OVERVIEW OF 2015 AND EARLY 2016 ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE
PROJECTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL BRANCH**
(Eric Butler and Branch Staff)

Introduction

In support of the Governor's Water Action Plan, the State evaluates water issues from a broad and strategic perspective by planning and implementing water management programs that combine flood management, ecosystem enhancement, water supply, water quality and other management actions to deliver multiple benefits across watershed and jurisdictional boundaries. This approach calls for pulling together multiple disciplines and interests to define problems and opportunities, and then working creatively and collaboratively to achieve practical, cost-effective, and sustainable multi-benefit solutions.

In 2015 and early 2016, the Board has supported these efforts and activities consistent with and in support of the goals of the Governor's Water Action Plan, Board's Strategic Plan, Central Valley Flood Protection Plan and other planning efforts and processes.

Through its efforts the Projects and Environmental Branch supports the Board's four Strategic Plan goals:

1. Preserve the integrity and function of flood protection systems in the Central Valley
2. Oversee implementation of the Central Valley Flood Protection Plan
3. Provide leadership in optimizing flood protection planning, management and operations
4. Develop broad public support for regional and system-wide multi-benefit flood risk reduction projects and programs

Branch activities also support the following Governor's Water Action Plan actions:

- Increase Flood Protection
- Protect and Restore Important Ecosystems
- Achieve the Co-Equal Goals for the Delta
- Increase Regional Self-Reliance and Integrated Water Management Across all Levels of Government

On Friday, February 26, 2016 staff will present selected highlights from this report to the Board.

Multi-Benefit Environmental Stewardship and Habitat Restoration Projects

Through its regulatory authority, the Branch works to support and promote multi-benefit projects including flood risk reduction projects, recreational projects, native habitat and fish passage improvements, etc. Staff Environmental Scientists reviewed over 9,600 State Clearinghouse Notices of proposed projects and determined 29 to be within Board jurisdiction. For those within Board jurisdiction staff reviewed environmental documents prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Staff provided comments to the lead agencies on six Environmental Impact Reports, sixteen Initial Study/Negative Declarations, and seven Notices of Preparation.

Staff engineers reviewed nineteen proposals for environmental stewardship / habitat restoration projects (many of which are multi-benefit projects) to ensure that the proposed projects:

- complied with the Board's California Code of Regulations, Title 23, Division 1 (Title 23)
- resulted in no adverse hydraulic or geotechnical impacts
- were consistent with the 2012 Central Valley Flood Protection Plan
- had no adverse impact on State Plan of Flood Control facilities

Notable multi-benefit projects completed or advanced in 2015 include:

- **Knights Landing Outfall Gates Fish Passage Alteration (Reclamation District 108)** – Staff and its U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) counterparts completed a several months-long coordinated federal-State-local review of proposed gate improvements, and issued a Board permit in September. Construction of this important early California Eco Restore initiative project was completed in October and will prevent salmon entry and stranding into the Colusa Basin Drain, while also maintaining outflows and appropriate water surface elevations.
- **Florin Creek Multi-Use Basin Project (SAFCA)** – Staff worked with SAFCA and USACE staff to review environmental documents and engineering designs for a proposed detention basin, habitat features, and encroachments in advance and in coordination with USACE construction work related to the South Sacramento County Streams Project. A Board permit was issued in January 2016.
- **Three Amigos Levee Non-Structural Alternative Project, Stanislaus County (USFWS)** – Staff continues to collaborate with USACE, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), DWR and River Partners to execute the Three Amigos Non-Structural Alternative Project on the San Joaquin River at the Service's San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge. In December 2015 the Board approved the staff's recommendation to approve an application to install a gated drainage structure to provide improved river floodplain connectivity for over 2,500 acres of restored floodplain habitat in the Refuge. Final remaining actions include permit issuance pending USACE 408 decision, USACE operations and maintenance manual update, and dissolution of Board / RD assurance agreements.

- **Tuolumne River Regional Park (City of Modesto)** – Staff reviewed environmental impact documents and engineering designs of a proposed riverwalk trail system and boardwalk, an outdoor classroom, picnic areas, and native riparian habitat restoration. A Board permit was issued in October.
- **Oroville Wildlife Area, Sutter Butte Flood Control Agency (SBFCA)** – Staff have provided guidance and coordination on early design and environmental impact documents. After their anticipated completion in the first half of 2016, Board consideration should occur as early as late spring with construction to follow.
- **Bullock Bend Restoration Project (Westervelt Environmental Services)** – Staff reviewed environmental studies and engineering designs for a proposal to breach an existing farm berm along the Sacramento River to restore floodplain function to approximately 96 acres in Yolo County, and to provide minor stage reductions in the project vicinity on the Sacramento River. Once final regulatory reviews are completed the project will be ready for Board consideration later this spring.

Flood System Alteration Projects

Staff has made recommendations to alter various facilities of the State Plan of Flood Control to reduce the risk of flooding in the Central Valley. Activities have included guidance and collaboration on various phases of planning and design, pre-application meetings, 408 alteration actions, technical review and permitting in collaboration with the USACE, and resolving issues that arise during design and construction. In addition to project-specific meetings the Branch and USACE Sacramento District staffs meet monthly to coordinate all project phases including design, approval, construction, and closeout. Seventeen projects were reviewed in 2015 including:

- **Natomas Sacramento Area Streams (NAS) and Sacramento River East Levee (SREL) Projects, Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency (SAFCA)** – Beginning with early conceptual designs staff is working, pursuant to USACE federal Title 33, USC Section 408, to complete, in cooperation with SAFCA, a joint review of potential improvements to levees along Arcade Creek, the Natomas East Main Drainage Canal, and the SREL between the American River and Freeport. Staff is providing guidance and participating in design and coordination meetings with the applicant, USACE, and other experts to ensure the proposed project provides the needed flood protection improvements as well as habitat features with the project footprints. USACE approval of the NAS project is expected within the next few months, while the SREL project is still in the early design phase.
- **American River Mile 0.5 Mitigation and SREL Reach 19A Landside Berm (SAFCA)** – Staff issued permits for Natomas Levee Improvement Program aquatic/riparian habitat at American River Mile 0.5 (March), and the placement of fill (removed from the RM 0.5 site) on the landside of Reach 19A along the Sacramento River (June).
- **Feather River West Levee Repair Project (SBFCA)** – Staff has continued to coordinate construction activities with SBFCA, inspectors, and USACE for Project Areas C (approved in 2013) and B and D (approved in 2014). Project Area C is

almost complete, with the exception of the few project gaps whose designs and environmental documents are being finalized. An application to permit gap construction is anticipated to be brought as a combined action to the Board at a late spring/early summer 2016 Board meeting.

- **Feather River West Levee Project, Encroachment Cleanup (SBFCA)** – Staff is coordinating with SBFCA, USACE, and Board Permitting and Enforcement staff to develop a streamlined approach to modify existing permits or issue new permits for those encroachments whose modification, removal, or construction was approved as part of the west levee alteration project. Staff is reviewing applications now, and plans to bring them to the Board later in 2016.
- **Yuba River South Levee Stability Berm Enlargement, Three Rivers Levee Improvement Authority (TRLIA)** – Staff reviewed environmental and design documents on an application to enlarge approximately 500 feet of the existing landside berm at the 1986 levee break site. The Board permit was issued in April and construction was completed in 2015.
- **Western Pacific Interceptor Canal (WPIC) Improvements (TRLIA)** – Staff is carrying out a joint review with USACE of two proposed flood system alteration projects to improve the WPIC SPFC west levee. One application to install a cutoff wall will require USACE HQ approval, while a second application for seepage berm construction can be approved at USACE Sacramento District. Both applications are anticipated to be ready for Board consideration over the next few months.
- **Yuba Goldfields Improvement Projects (TRLIA)** – Based on the staff's recommendation the Board approved TRLIA's application to complete their Interim 100-year Improvement Project in September. The final 200-year Improvement Project is currently in the design phase and staff will coordinate in the further design refinement as the project progresses. The 200-year Improvements will require future Board action.
- **Southport Levee Improvement Project, West Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency (WSAFCA)** – Staff has provided guidance and collaboration in design meetings for the Southport project. Staff is reviewing 100% plans and specifications and anticipates that a Record of Decision (from USACE Headquarters) and Letter of Permission (from USACE District) will be received in late spring/early summer 2016. A Board action based on receipt of those letters will be scheduled to approve the project construction permit.

Bridge and Rail Projects

- **California High Speed Rail Authority (HSRA)** – Staff delivered the first of many anticipated HSRA applications to the Board for its consideration in April. The approved permit authorized HSRA to construct an elevated viaduct across the Fresno River northeast of the City of Madera. The viaduct is a component of Construction Package 1 to build approximately 29 miles of track in Madera and Fresno Counties.

In addition, Board staff had several meetings with HSRA on Construction Packages 2 and 3 (CP 2-3) for an extension in excess of 60 miles from Fresno to Bakersfield. CP 2-3 will include approximately 36 grade separations of viaducts, underpasses and overpasses with an estimated cost of \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion.

Collaboration continues with HSRA staff on the Central Valley Wye Project which will cross a number of Board regulated streams and SPFC project levees. This section of the proposed system would serve as a junction for three lines heading (1) west to San Jose; (2) north to Sacramento; and (3) south to Fresno and the Los Angeles Basin. Staff educated HSRA on our permitting process, and USACE federal 404 and 408 reviews. NEPA and CEQA environmental reviews on the proposed Merced to San Jose section are scheduled for completion in 2016.

- **State and Local Bridges** – Staff reviewed and delivered sixteen (Caltrans or local agency) bridge replacement or repair permits subsequently approved by the Board in 2015. In December all open bridge permit applications were transferred to the Operations Branch, except for future High Speed Rail Authority projects which will temporarily remain in the Branch.

Board Sponsored Projects and Studies

- **Central Valley Integrated Flood Management Study (CVIFMS)** – Staff actively participates and provides guidance and support at weekly Project Design Team (PDT) meetings, and participates in plan formulation and development workshops through release of the draft watershed study and Board approval in the spring of 2016.
- **American River Watershed Projects** – Staff coordinates twice monthly with DWR and SAFCA regarding ongoing projects, efforts and studies within the American River Watershed. Branch staff provides input and guidance on those activities affecting the Board or requiring Board action. The meetings discuss American River Common Features, Folsom Joint Federal Project, Folsom Dam raise, and the Natomas Levee Improvement Program, among others.
- **Coordination with DWR Division of Flood Management (DFM), Flood Projects Office** – Board Project Managers (PM) are working with their DFM Flood Risk Reduction Branch counterparts to carry out Board Sponsored USACE Projects and Studies. Board PMs coordinate with their DFM counterparts to bring more timely and informed briefings and actions to the Board. Examples of these projects and studies include CVIFMS, Sacramento River General Re-evaluation Report (GRR), American River Common Features GRR, West Sacramento GRR, Folsom Dam Modifications and Dam Raise, SAFCA South Sacramento County Streams, Marysville Ring Levee Reconstruction, Sutter Basin Feasibility Study, and Lower San Joaquin River Feasibility Study to name a few.
- **Project Closeout** – Included in the above effort is staff coordination with DFM Project Managers to close out several Board sponsored USACE projects, and locally sponsored DWR cost-shared Early Implementation/Urban Flood Risk Reduction projects. Staff will develop project closeout schedules in coordination with DFM and

USACE staffs to review as-built documents, update USACE O&M manuals, and execute necessary Board actions. Projects to be closed out include:

- DWR Sacramento River Bank Protection Program, Cache Creek and Sac River LM 57.2 Setbacks
- Knights Landing Ridge Drainage District, Ridge Cut Improvements
- RD 2126 Atlas Tract Levee Realignment
- River Islands
- SAFCA Natomas Levee Improvement Program
- SAFCA South Sacramento County Streams
- SJAFCA Levee Improvements
- Three Rivers Levee Improvement Authority
- WSAFCA Levee Improvements

Central Valley Flood Protection Plan, 2012 Implementation / 2017 Update

Staff has provided guidance and collaboration with multiple agencies on implementation and planning efforts. Major activities include:

- **Coordinating Committee** – staff support to the Board / coordination with DWR and other stakeholders
- **Conservation Strategy Advisory Committee** – In response to stakeholder requests staff assisted the Board to activate the Conservation Strategy (CS) Advisory Committee to advise the Board on the measurable objectives for application of Conservation Measures included in the Conservation Strategy. Staff supports a Board subcommittee to plan and conduct monthly meetings, and to provide monthly reports to the full Board.
- **Basinwide Feasibility Studies** – Staff meets weekly to coordinate with DWR's lead planners and project managers for the Sacramento and San Joaquin Basinwide Feasibility Studies. Staff provides guidance, coordination, and input for both studies at meetings and workshops and will continue this effort through study completion anticipated summer 2016.
- **Regional Flood Management Plans** – Staff supported the six Regional Flood Management Plan (RFMP) teams throughout 2015. Staff continues to support ongoing RFMP meetings with a current focus on review of regional projects submitted to DWR for inclusion in the 2017 CVFPP or Basinwide Feasibility Studies.
- **Preparations for 2017 Update** – Staff is developing a proposed team of Branch staff and Board members to begin early review and coordination with DWR CVFPP planners to review key CVFPP 2017 Update draft documents throughout 2016 in advance of the December 2016 deadline for DWR to submit the draft 2017 CVFPP to the Board for adoption.

Other Branch Activities

- **Regulatory Review and Comment to General Plan Safety Elements** – California Government Code §65302(g)(5) requires that cities and counties within the Sacramento-San Joaquin Drainage District consult with the Board prior to preparing or revising General Plan safety elements, and to submit draft elements to the Board for review and comment. In compliance with this statutory requirement, staff reviewed and provided comments to four local flood control agencies in 2015.
- **Board Participation in Panels, Programs and Briefings to State, Local and Federal partners and other stakeholders** – In 2015, Staff supported the Board Members and Executive Officer on significant issues and events, including: researching and developing materials describing the Board’s history, jurisdiction, authority, mission, strategic plan, and its role in adoption and implementation of the 2012 Central Valley Flood Protection Plan in light of recent flood related legislation, and preparing PowerPoint presentations and documents for use by the Legislature and others during budget and oversight hearings.
- Presentations included:
 - Oversight hearing at Assembly Committee on Water, Parks and Wildlife (January)
 - Assembly Budget Subcommittee 3 on Resources and Transportation (March)
 - Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee for Budget Subcommittee 2 on Resources, Environmental Protection, Energy and Transportation (March and May)
 - Board Workshop on Funding Options for Board Operations (April)
 - “World Affairs Forum 2015: The Politics of Water!” in Juneau, Alaska (October)
 - USACE Civil Works Review Board, Major Subordinate Commanders and District Commanders, American River Common Features GRR and West Sacramento GRR for decision documents for projects requiring authorization by the United States Congress (December).

Prepared By: Nancy Moricz, Senior Engineer
Ali Porbaha, Senior Engineer
James Herota, Senior Environmental Scientist
Eric Butler, Branch Chief

Reviewed By: Leslie Gallagher, Executive Officer