



Riparian Habitat Joint Venture
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July 1, 1998

CALFED Bay-Delta Program
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1155
Sacramento, CA 95814
Attention: Rick Breitenbach

Dear Mr. Breitenbach:

The Riparian Habitat Joint Venture (RHJV) is pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the Draft Programmatic EIS/EIR for the Bay-Delta Program. Our comments are limited to the Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan (ERPP), Volumes 1 and 2.

We are concerned that comments prepared by the RHJV and submitted under a cover letter dated November 28, 1997 by Daniel Taylor, then Chairman of the RHJV Implementation Board, were not considered in the current draft ERPP. Despite considerable effort by RHJV staff and board members to prepare specific comments which we believe would substantially improve the ERPP, we find that none of these comments were incorporated in the current draft. This is particularly disturbing in light of the desire by CALFED to forge partnerships with conservation and resource user groups. We request that the following comments, which reiterate and expand upon the concerns expressed in the November 28, 1997 letter, be considered and incorporated into the next draft document and an explanation be provided to the RHJV for those comments considered but rejected.

The RHJV is a union of Federal and State resource management agencies and private conservation organizations whose common goal is to protect, enhance and restore riparian habitats for California's resident and migratory birds. (See Appendices 1 and 2 for Working Agreement and program summary information.)

The RHJV is currently undertaking the preparation of a Riparian Bird Conservation Plan for 14 priority riparian associated bird species in California. It will be released in draft this summer and will be completed by year's end.

Mr. Rick Breitenbach
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Based upon the collective expertise of the state's top ornithologists, the Riparian Bird Conservation Plan will establish target populations for the fourteen priority species as well as strategic habitat restoration and management areas in California. The Bay-Delta watershed is a primary focus of our planning efforts.

The RHJV looks forward to establishing a mutually beneficial working relationship with the CALFED Bay-Delta program. If you have any questions regarding our comments or seek further information from the RHJV, we welcome the opportunity to assist you. You may contact the RHJV at the letterhead address or by telephone 916/481-5577.

Sincerely,



Lyann Comrack, Coordinator
RHJV Implementation Board

Attachments

cc: D. Evans, RHJV Board Chairman,
Point Reyes Bird Observatory

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**Riparian Habitat Joint Venture (RHJV) Comments on CALFED draft
Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan (ERPP) (March 1998)**

General Comments

The Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan (ERPP), Volumes 1-2, admits that its primary focus is on listed aquatic species and water considerations. Other vital wildlife groups are largely ignored, greatly weakening the plan and its effectiveness. On the other hand, the ERPP strives to take an ecosystem perspective in terms of its recommendations for ecological protection and restoration (which we endorse). Given those two facts, these are our primary concerns:

a. On balance, no ecosystem restoration targets or programmatic actions should actually cause detrimental effects to other species. This approach is reinforced through the solution principle of "no significant redirected impacts". To illustrate, in the statement made that relative to its focus outside the legally defined Delta, "generally, the species list is confined to fish species, and the habitat is predominantly riparian and riverine aquatic." The needs of aquatic species, relative to the areal extent, size, configuration, fragmentation, species composition and management of riparian forest/shrub habitat, are different from the needs of avian species. Using solely the needs of aquatic species to guide riparian restoration actions could, in some cases, result in negative impacts to avian populations, thereby insidiously sowing seeds of future endangered species conflicts by creating "sink" habitats and populations. According to Martin and Finch, eds. (1995): "Sink populations are those that do not produce enough young to balance adult mortality, and which exist only because of continued colonization from elsewhere. Land managers may misinterpret immigration to and local extinction in sink areas as a population response to management actions. Buffer areas that create sink habitats can jeopardize metapopulation [sets of local populations that interact through dispersal of individuals] persistence if sink habitats are preferentially used over source habitats."

The ERPP recognizes (vol. 2, p. 128) that riparian habitats in the Central Valley along the Sacramento River historically averaged four to five miles wide. Yet on p. 135, restoration of riparian corridors at least 100 yards wide are called for to support neotropical migratory bird species. However, this recommendation is based upon the tremendous assumption that riparian habitats 100 yards wide along the Sacramento River will be adequate to support healthy nesting populations of these species.

On the contrary, recent data from a number of regions suggest that many, if not most, populations of area-sensitive species that occur on minimally sized fragments are not producing young at a rate that matches natural mortality rates (Martin and Finch, eds., 1995).

In general, bird species nesting in narrow belts of vegetation typically experience higher predation rates, higher parasitism rates from brown-headed cowbirds, and increased interspecific competition. Mature overstory with well-developed understory vegetation provides thermal cover, migration corridors, and diverse nesting and feeding opportunities for wildlife.

b. We are concerned that the current ERPP is inadequate to support a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) that covers all the listed terrestrial species it addresses, since the primary focus of ecosystem restoration actions is admittedly to benefit aquatic species. An HCP, by definition, provides for a comprehensive plan based on sound science to protect the species it covers. This plan, in turn, allows regulatory agencies to provide a level of assurance to those who will be issued incidental take permits that the designated system for handling species impacts can be relied upon for a specified period of time. This document is inadequate as a basis from which to develop an HCP that will be used to cover impacts to the terrestrial species included in the ERPP.

We support the proposed ecological indicators of increasing populations of listed bird species and increasing distribution of these species (as well as the neotropical migratory bird guild). However, a massive assumption is being made that quantity of habitat as measured through aerial photographs will provide an adequate measure of the proposed ecological indicators (i.e. bird populations). Scientific data does not support this assumption. Bird populations must be monitored and assessed themselves to provide an indication of their status. Cost effective and statistically valid methods of monitoring bird populations do exist and can be implemented as part of the ERPP HCP. Additionally, aerial photos showing extent of habitat will tell very little about the quality of the habitat absent ground-truthing.

c. We strongly support the vision for restoration of natural floodplains and flood processes described in vol. 1, pp 44-45. Likewise we concur with the conclusion that considering the vast percentage of riparian habitats that has already been lost and degraded in California, restoration, partial restoration or even simulation of natural physical processes in floodplains is necessary to

achieve riparian habitat restoration goals (vol. 1, p. 100). We endorse the more specific goals of "expanding the quantity and quality of stream meander corridor and associated riparian forest" along the Sacramento River (vol 2, p. 147) and to setback levees, improve land management and to reconnect the Cosumnes River with its floodplain (vol. 2, pp. 373-374). This is because bird monitoring data gathered through extensive research (Point Reyes Bird Observatory (PRBO)) in the Central Valley has documented the highest diversity and productivity of birds in areas with a thick, multispecies vegetative understory. This dense young vegetation grows most readily following a flood in which seed-laden sediments are deposited and the soil is saturated with moisture.

d. We support the development of a comprehensive program to assess wetland and riparian restoration in the Bay-Delta watershed. Due to the extreme importance of these habitats to many forms of wildlife, including terrestrial wildlife, we recommend that monitoring of bird population demographics be included as an integral measure in this program. Birds, because of their diverse ecological needs and high position on the food chain, provide an ideal measure of overall habitat quality. Birds are also easily monitored by standardized methods that facilitates comparisons between sites and management options. Clearly the role of birds should be much more emphasized in all components of CALFED's ERPP.

e. The ERPP identifies several agencies and programs which have overlapping goals and objectives and for which CALFED should encourage coordination. Programs such as the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission hydroelectric facility relicensing process and the Central Valley Project Improvement Act have generated information valuable to the CALFED process and, conversely, may be affected by implementation of CALFED goals and objectives. We agree that coordination with these programs is important and strongly recommend including the RHJV as a program identified for close coordination.

Eighteen participating agencies and organizations of the RHJV have already designated and supported, both financially and otherwise, significant riparian restoration and monitoring projects in the CALFED affected area. We believe that coordination with the RHJV should also entail consistency with the goals of the RHJV's *Riparian Bird Conservation Plan*, due out in draft form this summer.

Like the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, the *Riparian Bird Conservation Plan* will establish target populations as well as priority habitat restoration and management areas in California for a number of priority riparian bird species.

Specific Comments

The following specific comments should be applied to all ERPP volumes.

Stressors

- Add "Grazing" as a stressor. Grazing affects many streams and watersheds and can, depending upon its management, have a significant negative impact on the nesting productivity of birds through reduction of protective cover. Loss of vegetation dramatically reduces nesting success of riparian-associated species through increased nest predation and parasitism.
- Aquatic contamination should be expanded to the watershed level to document contaminant problems before they enter the water system. This is important to identify pollutant sources. Note that birds, particularly through their eggs, are very effective bio-accumulators of contaminants that provide a standardized collection method.
- Clearing and/or elimination of the understory should be added to the list of primary stressors affecting riparian habitats. Research and monitoring by PRBO and others suggests that lack of sufficient understory cover in riparian habitats is a contributor to decreased selection of the habitat for nesting and decreased nest success (true for Song Sparrow, Blue Grosbeak, and Common Yellowthroat). Bird response to dense understory growth after natural disturbance (e.g. fire and flood) has resulted in higher than average nest success.

Monitoring

- It is essential that standardized monitoring methods be defined and included in all phases of CALFED. Organizations within the RHJV have extensive experience in this area and can assist with this process. Establishing standardized methods will be essential to assure that the many diverse

projects can be compared. Standardized methods, such as those defined for avian monitoring, will also facilitate the creation of a centralized database to make this information available for broader analysis. Intensive terrestrial monitoring and assessment (conducted over years), using methods such as bird-banding and point-count stations, should be used to assess and evaluate the long-term success of restoration sites and to develop management options for improved restoration efforts.

- It would facilitate comparisons between studies of sub-programs and restoration efforts if standardized river stretches were identified. Thus all researchers could break their projects into segments that could more easily be compiled in a central database.
- A considerable amount of baseline information concerning the status of neotropical migrant and other native passerine species in Sacramento River, its eastside tributaries, and San Joaquin River riparian habitats has been developed by PRBO and is being incorporated into a GIS system in cooperation with the California Rivers Assessment at the University of California, Davis. This data set and the same monitoring protocols should be adopted to continue monitoring and assessment of bird populations in riparian, wetland, grassland, oak woodland, and other habitats within the Bay-Delta watershed. The Riparian Habitat Implementation Objective should include the statement that restored riparian habitat includes diverse bird communities with high levels of nesting success. These are parameters that are easily measured and compared between sites. Further, they reflect a range of other ecological values, such as vegetation diversity and insect abundance, that are hard to measure and compare.
- Avian diversity and productivity is a great ecosystem performance indicator that should be incorporated into any monitoring scheme. Birds provide a way to assess both site-specific factors such as vegetation condition and habitat quality as well as broader issues that affect multiple habitats, such as high water events.
- Birds can be excellent indicators of environmental contamination due to their elevated position on the food chain and their diverse diets. Egg shells are easily collected and analyzed; they provide a standardized measure to compare different sites. Egg shell analysis should be included as a monitoring method for contaminants.

The following comments are specific to each volume of the ERPP and are referenced by volume and page number:

VOLUME 1

Page 4: Long-term studies should be initiated in addition to the immediate focused research suggested under item #5. There is a need for long term studies to evaluate the dynamics of restoration sites which change considerably over time (i.e. different successional stages have different values to different species).

Page 6: "Ecological Process:" This document should include changes in successional stages in riparian habitat as an ecological process. All riparian habitat does not have the same value. Species will use different successional stages in different ways.

Page 6: Add "urban development adjacent to riparian areas" as a major stressor.

Page 10: Agricultural land issues should also include reductions in the introduction of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers into aquatic systems.

Pages 12, 128-29: The following ecosystem elements should be added to the Tables for the following reasons:

Yellow Warbler: Considered a Species of Special Concern (SSC) in California, the Yellow Warbler is experiencing significant breeding population declines in the ERPP zone.

Salt Marsh Common Yellowthroat: Also a SSC due to loss of breeding habitat and concomitant breeding population declines. The range of this population extends into the Suisun Marsh/North San Francisco Bay zone and Delta region.

Samuel's Song Sparrow (*Melodia melospiza samuelis*): is a SMC and SSC. The same Species Vision could be written to cover both Suisun and Samuels's Song Sparrow subspecies. Samuel's Song Sparrow (which is restricted to San Pablo Bay) has the same habitat affinities and faces pretty much the same threats as the Suisun Song Sparrow.

Tricolored Blackbird: Virtually endemic to California, this species is a SSC and a federal Species of Special Management Concern (SMC) (USFWS Region 1, 1995). Tricolored Blackbirds appear to be experiencing long-term population declines and are currently the focus of research by the California Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The species breeds in the ERPP zone and, perhaps even more significantly, winters in great numbers in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys.

The following species, both of which are SSC and SMC, are associated with upland habitats (grasslands, agricultural zones) and should be addressed as appropriate: Burrowing Owl, Mountain Plover.

Southwestern Willow Flycatcher and Least Bell's Vireo, (both are State and Federally-listed endangered species) although not now known to nest in the ERPP area, occurred historically and may still be encountered during migration. The possibility of creating appropriate migratory resting areas and future breeding habitat should not be overlooked.

Pages 13, 264-265: Neotropical migratory bird guild should be included in all ecological zones and the goal of increasing riparian habitat in all ecological zones (pg. 75).

Pages 36, 44, 264: Linkage with other restoration programs should include coordination with the RHJV. The RHJV, developed through the auspices of Partners in Flight (PIF), will provide coordinated development of riparian restoration plans with primary focus on conservation of migrant landbirds via the *Riparian Bird Conservation Plan* and other related RHJV programs.

Page 86: The Introduction states sloughs are important for "breeding, feeding, resting and roosting waterfowl". This is too narrowly defined since many other bird species (i.e. shorebirds, waders, neotropical migratory birds, and other listed "landbirds") use this habitat extensively as well.

Page 119: Stressors should include pesticide and herbicide applications and also practices which encourage mobilization of salts and selenium in agricultural waste water. Leaching salts from the soils is mentioned as a benefit to agricultural stakeholders but this also creates problems downstream and in the Delta where these salts concentrate.

Pages 233-264, Species Visions:

- Statements of purported fact for all of the Species Visions should be backed up with citations, as appropriate.
- Most of the "targets" are too vague. There is a need for firmer targets, such as maintaining populations at current (or other target) levels.
- Species Visions for the Neotropical Migratory Bird Guild, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and Swainson's Hawk should all be implemented "consistent with the goals and objectives of the RHJV's *Riparian Bird Conservation Plan*". The Plan has been developed with input from the state's leading ornithologists and will be released in draft form later this summer. Like the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, the *Riparian Bird Conservation Plan* will establish target populations as well as priority habitat restoration and management areas in California for 14 riparian-associated species. The PIF/RHJV list of priority riparian bird species includes the following:

Swainson's Hawk
Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Willow Flycatcher
Bank Swallow
Swainson's Thrush
Bell's Vireo
Warbling Vireo
Yellow Warbler
Wilson's warbler
Common Yellowthroat
Yellow-breasted Chat
Blue Grosbeak
Song Sparrow
Black-headed Grosbeak

- A list of these riparian-associated birds should be highlighted as a specific priority group. While neotropical migrants have been identified as a broad guild, a subset of declining riparian birds needs special attention. The statewide PIF coalition of over 30 state, federal, and private groups agreed to this list of riparian priority birds. The RHJV focus on these species provides an ideal integration with CALFED.

- Vision for the Suisun Song Sparrow includes the following statement: "The possibility of managing breeding of the species to increase its reproductive success should be investigated (e.g., transferring eggs and/or young between nearby isolated populations to increase genetic interchange between populations)." We support increasing reproductive success of this species but strongly disagree with the methods identified in the parenthetical clause. Evidence suggests reproductive success is low due to heavy predation and flooding; therefore, egg or young transfer would not serve to improve this situation. Further, exchange of eggs or young would only serve to genetically homogenize the set of Suisun Song Sparrow populations, thus breaking up incipient genetic differentiation, which we feel is detrimental to the subspecies. (PRBO)
- Species Visions for Swainson's Hawk should include determination of current population numbers and the establishment of target population objectives.
- To avoid significant and potentially irrevocable impacts to Bank Swallows, we recommend that pulse flows or flushing flows for fish and/or ecosystem process restoration be prohibited (or at least severely curtailed and closely monitored) during the months of late March through June, the swallow's breeding period. It appears that in most sections of the ERPP where pulse flows or modified dam releases are discussed, the month of March is the primary time for these activities. This would not normally conflict with Bank Swallow breeding needs, particularly if the flows were concentrated in the early half of the month. However, any such releases subsequent to April 1 could potentially result in the complete destruction of entire colonies. With the Sacramento River from Red Bluff to Colusa supporting 50% of the remaining Bank Swallow population in California, adverse activity could decimate this population. We also recommend that Bank Swallow colony monitoring should be a priority if managed flows to support channel formation (flushing or pulse flows) were necessarily undertaken from late march through June. Flows that impact colonies should be avoided; these would most likely be flows raising river levels more that 2-3 feet.
- Species Visions for Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo should include determination of current population numbers and the establishment of target population objectives. The species has a large home range, averaging 50 - 60 acres per pair. Patch size issues are important to this species. Sites greater than 200 acres in extent and wider than 600 meters, with greater than 65% canopy closure are optimal. Highest priority sites for restoration are

those capable of producing large sites with high canopy cover and foliage volume, and moderately large and tall trees. The ideal target for habitat restoration to maintain a viable population of Yellow-billed Cuckoos is to restore blocks of habitat that will support 25 pairs per group (or subpopulation). (S. Laymon, 1998. Riparian Bird Species Plan Species Account-Yellow-billed Cuckoo).

- "Neotropical Migratory Bird Guild Vision" should state "to maintain and increase healthy populations of neotropical migratory birds by restoring the habitats on which they depend at levels that can support nonconsumptive use and ecosystem function, consistent with the goals and objectives of the RHJV's *Riparian Bird Conservation Plan*". Current population levels (or indices) and trends and a program to track these population levels and trends should be established. Aerial photograph evaluation of extent of "habitat" is insufficient to determine if the goal of increased populations is being achieved. Baseline information could be established using current Breeding Bird Survey and Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship Program results. Further steps should include the determination of where monitoring gaps exist, assessment of existing programs to meet monitoring and assessment needs, and development of a comprehensive monitoring scheme. Also, there is a need to set target population levels or trend levels. Further, the extent to which brown-headed cowbirds parasitize passerines in the ERPP area should be evaluated.
- Just as riparian and riverine aquatic habitat actions are proposed in all 14 ecological zones defined by the Bay-Delta program (p. 79), the vision for achieving conservation of neotropical migrants should encompass all 14 ecological zones.
- The time period during which this guild of birds depends upon the flora of California to migrate, forage and reproduce should be expanded from May-September to March-October. Neotropical migrants are present in California during these spring and fall months. Many species initiate nesting in April.
- Under Implementation Objectives, Targets and Programmatic Actions, we strongly recommend that the following be added as an objective: Increase productivity of neotropical birds in the Central Valley. This is an important goal because increases in distribution and abundance will not necessarily guarantee viability of the entire population due to source/sink dynamics.

- We also recommend that the following programmatic actions be added:
 - 1.) Improve management of riparian understory habitat to ensure adequate vegetative cover to support nesting.
 - 2.) Establish new programs or expand existing programs to provide incentives for landowner participation in improved habitat/orchard management programs. Research and monitoring we have conducted shows that neotropical migrants and resident native birds respond positively to integrated pest management in orchards bordering riparian zones. A cover crop reduces feeding areas for parasitic cowbirds and decreased use of pesticides may contribute to increased foraging and nesting within orchards. Keep in mind that the neotropical migrants targeted by this program are primarily insect eaters, and would augment agricultural crops rather than harming them.
 - 3.) Establish programs that allow government agencies and bird research/conservation organizations to work cooperatively to increase the efficiency of existing strategies and land bird/riparian management plans.
- Shorebird and Wading Bird Guild should include Implementation Objectives addressing increasing quantity and quality of breeding, feeding and wintering habitat on agricultural lands.
- Species and Species Group Visions should include all of the major species guilds (i.e. raptors, divers). Waterbirds such as grebes, loons, cormorants, non-endangered rails, etc., do not currently fit into the management program and should. Resident landbirds (therefore NOT neotropical migrants) are not represented by the current scheme, and should be.

Page 269: We question why habitat conversion is not listed as a major stressor in vol. 1, especially since protection of existing habitat and restoration of land to various habitat types appear ubiquitously throughout the ERPP as programmatic actions and restoration targets. Habitat conversion also fits the ERPP's own definition of a "stressor." Additionally, this stressor is also implicitly recognized in the vision summary for the ecosystem element of agricultural lands (vol. 1, p. 119). The ERPP encourages production of crop types that provide high wildlife habitat value, without recognizing that certain water policies may promote conversion of grain and vegetable crops to

permanent crops such as orchards and vineyards, which are inherently of less habitat value to wildlife. We support the vision statement that discourages development of ecologically important agricultural lands for urban or industrial uses. Again, land use factors are explicitly recognized as stressors (vol. 1, p. 121).

It should be clearly recognized that flooding can be essential to maintain the diversity of riparian plant communities. The disturbance caused by normal spring flooding increases plant diversity and the regeneration of a thick understory that nesting birds rely upon. Extensive research conducted throughout the Central Valley (PRBO and others) has documented the highest diversity and productivity of birds in areas with a thick multispecies vegetative understory.

Pages 275-276: The "water diversions" vision only concerns itself with screening issues and needs to be expanded to include amount and timing of water diversions.

Page 279: The "Dam et al. Vision" should be expanded to include water quality issues (i.e. water temperature) and amount and timing of releases.

Page 326: Include refineries and boat traffic as major contaminant issues.

Page 326: Contaminants also pose a significant human health problem.

Page 349: The "Disturbance" section should be expanded to include commercial boat traffic. Further, "unmanaged recreational uses" can have disturbance impacts on wildlife, especially some of the sensitive species such as Swainson's Hawk and Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

Page 350: "Disturbance associated with pets of people who live near wildlife habitat" should be expanded to include predation from cats (and dogs to a lesser degree).

Volume 2

Page 4: ERPP "Steps" should also include provisions for long term studies to evaluate the effects of specific actions; also, provisions should be made in key areas for long term monitoring on a consistent basis.

Page 5: "Species and Species Groups" item #2 emphasizes "economic importance" only in terms of sport or a commercial fishery. The item should be expanded to include recreational values (i.e., bird-watching). Bird-watching is one of the fastest growing hobbies in America, rivaling even the popularity of golf. Between 1982 and 1995, the number of people participating in bird-watching grew by 155% compared to 93% and 72% for hiking and backpacking, respectively, while participation in fishing and hunting decreased by 3% and 11% respectively. Nationwide there are over 63 million people who feed birds and 25 million people who will travel to watch birds. Bird-watching has become a cottage industry in some towns, with annual bird festivals drawing large crowds and "ecotourist" income to local businesses. In California alone, there are currently eight annual bird festivals that contribute to local economies, including the Lodi Crane Festival launched this year (G. Elliott, pers. com.).

Page 5: "Stressors" category should include habitat loss.

Page 74: The target for the Neotropical Migratory Birds is too vague. Measurable population standards need to be set.

Pages 74,436: Rationale for Neotropical Migratory Birds should be expanded to include migrants as well as breeding species. Pure migrant landbirds use various habitats, but especially riparian, for feeding and shelter during migration. These stopover sites are of critical importance during passage to and from wintering areas. A landbird is able to meet its energy needs during migration only if it encounters habitat of suitable quality enroute. We recommend expanding the rationale to include a discussion of pure migrants and extending the period of use from May until September to March until October.

Page 71: Objectives and targets for Swainson's Hawk should be included. Furthermore, objectives and targets for additional species as recommended above should be included.

Page 96: The Salt Marsh Common Yellowthroat should be included in the list of animals adversely affected. This particular ecological zone contains some of the most important breeding habitat for this sensitive taxon.

Page 121: Add a paragraph describing the neotropical migratory bird guild.

Page 119: Regarding the "Black Rail Vision," only one programmatic action (restoration of tidal emergent wetland habitat) is identified for implementation- yet in volume 1, pp 237-238, 10 programmatic actions are identified to achieve the target and implementation objectives for this species. It is difficult to assess whether the implementation of additional programmatic actions is warranted, as there is no quantitative assessment of current habitat suitability for the Black Rail nor information on how habitat suitability would change over time under the proposed action. We recommend the inclusion of quantitative assessments of effects to species and species group ecosystem elements.

Page 126: Yellow Warbler should be addressed in paragraph 6.

Several "Ecological zone visions" omissions were noted as follows:

a. The "riparian and riverine aquatic habitat vision" should include information about its value as breeding and migratory stop-over habitat for neotropical migrants. (See pp 197, 211, 233, 262, 294, 326, 348, 379, 414, and 445.)

b. Beginning with the Sacramento River Ecological Zone on page 125, include species vision for "neotropical migratory birds." for each Ecological zone.

c. Beginning with the Sacramento River Ecological Zone on page 125, develop and include neotropical migratory bird group objectives and targets for each Ecological Zone.

d. Beginning with the Sacramento River Ecological Zone on page 125, include integration with Riparian Habitat Joint Venture for each Ecological Zone. The Riparian Habitat Joint Venture appears to have been almost entirely omitted from Volume II of the draft Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan. Yet, partners in this effort have already designated and supported significant riparian restoration, monitoring and research projects in all of the Ecological Zones. The RHJV *Riparian Bird Conservation Plan* will contain recommendations for high priority riparian protection, restoration, and management goals in seven of the 14 ecological zones. We look forward to working with CALFED staff so that these goals can be effectively incorporated into the Bay-Delta Program.

Page 133-137: Target widths for riparian habitat are too narrow. The RHJV will provide data to the planning team on habitat needs of riparian associated bird species as it becomes available. We would like to emphasize the need to examine each site on its own merits and develop restoration criteria dependent on the qualities of the site.

Reference: Martin, Thomas E. and Deborah M. Finch, eds. 1995. Ecology and Management of Neotropical Migratory Birds, A Synthesis and Review of Critical Issues. Oxford University Press, New York.

Appendix 1: Working Agreement for the Riparian Habitat Joint Venture of the California Chapter of Partners in Flight.

Appendix 2: Riparian Habitat Joint Venture program summary information

APPENDIX 1
WORKING AGREEMENT
for the
Riparian Habitat Joint Venture
of the
California Chapter of Partners in Flight

PURPOSE

California Partners in Flight Habitat Joint Ventures unite federal and state resource management agencies, private conservation organizations, corporations, foundations, and individuals in a common effort to protect and enhance habitats for landbirds native to California. It is the intent of this agreement to strengthen existing statewide collaborative efforts, such as the 1991 Agreement on Biological Diversity, to help sustain and enhance the integrity of biological and natural resource systems and the human and economic values they support. The cooperative framework of the Habitat Joint Ventures fosters mutually agreed upon habitat conservation objectives and the commitment of resources necessary to meet those objectives. The California Partners in Flight Habitat Joint Ventures will eventually encompass all habitats within California with declining or at risk populations of native landbirds.

This initial effort, the Riparian Habitat Joint Venture (RHJV), will focus on setting habitat objectives for riparian zones throughout the state. Riparian areas are the richest terrestrial habitats for breeding and wintering birds in the Western United States. California riparian habitats have undergone extensive modification and degradation. Only 5 - 10 % of the original riparian habitat in California still exists today. Subsequent working agreements will be developed for other California habitats (eg. coastal sage scrub, oak woodlands, etc.), as deemed necessary to focus attention and resources to restore and protect native landbirds in critical areas.

The primary purpose of this RHJV is to conserve, increase and improve riparian habitat throughout California in a common effort to protect and enhance habitats for both California's native birds and neotropical migratory birds in a manner consistent with the other objectives of the California Chapter of Partners in Flight.

RIPARIAN HABITAT JOINT VENTURE GOAL AND PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

GOAL: Communicate, evaluate, and analyze common riparian habitat issues. Develop a RHJV Implementation Plan which sets forth quantifiable habitat objectives, and outlines strategies and implementation actions to protect and restore riparian habitats for California's native landbird species as identified by the California Chapter of Partners in Flight.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Compile existing data on riparian habitat throughout the State to identify key riparian areas, as well as information gaps. Promote and coordinate efforts to obtain needed information.

2. Develop guidelines for protection of existing habitat on public lands and recommend alternatives for protection on private land, including fee title or perpetual easement acquisition, long-term cooperative management agreements with landowners, and develop support for protective zoning and tax incentives to secure protective management. This would be accomplished by cooperative agreement, purchase and initiation of zoning and tax incentives on private lands and management guidelines on public lands.
3. Restore riparian habitats on public and private lands using commonly accepted, scientifically valid restoration techniques. Incorporate restored habitat into a long-term protection and management program as discussed in Item 2 above.
4. Enhance the productivity and biodiversity of riparian communities using appropriate management techniques on public and private lands.
5. Establish a network of high-quality riparian habitats throughout California to enhance and protect native birds.
6. Educate the general public and resource managers about the value of California's riparian habitat to promote its protection and restoration.

STRUCTURE OF DIFFERENT GROUPS

Joint Venture Implementation Board

The "Implementation Board" consists of designees from four conservation organizations that receive technical assistance from the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Bureau of Reclamation, (BR), California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), California State Lands Commission (CSLC) and other organizations and agencies. Agencies serve as *ex officio* advisory members of the Board. If unable to attend a meeting, a member can designate an "Acting" to attend.

The voting members of the Board consists of representatives from the following organizations:

Point Reyes Bird Observatory (PRBO)
National Audubon Society (NAS)
Kem River Research Center (KRRC)
The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
Ducks Unlimited (DU)

Riparian Habitat Technical Committee

The "Technical Committee" will consist of one biologist from USFS, PRBO, NAS, KRRC, USFWS, BLM, BR, TNC, DU, WCB, CSLC, CDFG, and other future signatories of this agreement in addition to the Project Coordinator who will serve as Chairperson. A vice-chair will also be designated. If both the Chair and Vice Chair are unable to attend a meeting, any member can be designated by the Chair to lead the meeting.

Working Committees

Each "Working Committee" formed will consist of at least one member from the Riparian Habitat Technical Committee. This technical committee member will chair the working committee and recruit needed participants.

Working Committees are responsible for making policy and scientific recommendations regarding the structure and content of the Implementation Plan to the Implementation Board. Following approval from the Board, the Working Committees draft pertinent section(s) of the Implementation Plan.

Other interested agencies and organizations may be invited to participate on various committees as needed and as approved by the Implementation Board. However, designated committee members only are responsible for developing their reports.

IMPLEMENTATION BOARD FUNCTION

1. Oversee development and completion of the Implementation Plan.
2. Assign tasks to the Riparian Habitat Technical Committee and consider and ratify the habitat recommendations. Approve reporting format.
3. The Chair and Vice Chair shall change on an annual basis, rotating in alphabetical order by organization/agency name, with Vice Chair assuming chairmanship as the Chair is vacated.
4. Make decisions and take action on conservation activities, and coordinate with other statewide riparian activities, including the California Riparian Habitat Conservation Program of the Wildlife Conservation Board.
5. Track accomplishment of objectives and approve suggested changes to Implementation Plan.
6. Meet quarterly at a time and location to be determined by the Board members.
7. Meet with and/or review reports from the Riparian Habitat Technical Committee at appropriate intervals.

RIPARIAN HABITAT TECHNICAL COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS

1. Perform work assignments from the Implementation Board, and prepare quarterly progress reports.
2. Recommend working committees for approval by the Implementation Board.
3. Provide technical information to the Implementation Board to set and achieve habitat objectives.
4. Supervise working committees and attend working committee meetings as appropriate.
5. Meet at least monthly. If requested, meet in concurrent sessions with the Implementation Board, quarterly.

WORKING COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS

1. Receive their authority to function from the Riparian Habitat Technical Committee and Implementation Board. The chairperson of each working committee will be a member of the Riparian Habitat Technical Committee.
2. Receive assignments from and report directly to the Riparian Habitat Technical Committee. Working Committee reports will go to the Riparian Habitat Technical Committee chair for review and are then submitted to the Implementation Board for final action.
3. Working Committee(s) should consult current literature and outside expertise to ensure the scientific rigor of their recommendations.
4. Establish their own meeting schedule to complete assignments.

PROJECT COORDINATOR FUNCTIONS

1. Chair Riparian Habitat Technical Committee.
2. Primary liaison between Implementation Board and Technical Committees.
3. Principal spokesperson on technical issues for the Riparian Habitat Joint Venture activities.
4. Responsible for scheduling and coordinating the development and completion of the Implementation Plan.

In pursuit of this Agreement:

1. This Agreement shall become effective upon signing by any five parties and shall continue in full force until the signatory parties become fewer than five in number. Termination of participation by any party shall require thirty (30) days written notice to the Chair of the Implementation Board.
2. Nothing herein shall be considered as obligating any party in the expenditure of funds or the future payment of money in excess of appropriations authorized by law and administratively allocated by any party for this work.
3. Nothing herein shall be construed as limiting or affecting in any way the delegated authority of any party.
4. Amendments to this Agreement may be proposed to the Chair of the Implementation Board at any time by any party and shall become effective upon written approval by all parties then signatory to this Agreement.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have joined into this Agreement by affixing their signatures on the dates shown below:



Douglas P. Wheeler, Secretary
The Resources Agency
State of California

9-6-94
Date



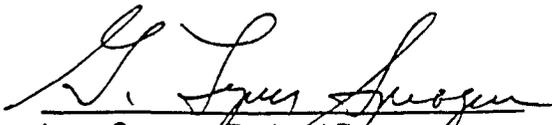
Stephen Laymon, Director
Kern River Research Center

9-6-94
Date

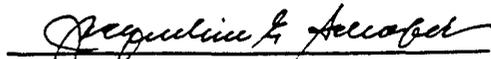


Daniel Evans, Executive Director
Point Reyes Bird Observatory

Sept 6. 1994
Date


Lynn Sprague, Regional Forester
U.S.D.A. Forest Service

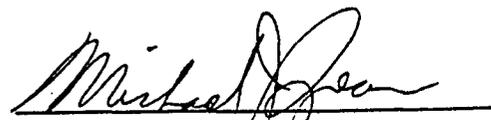
12/2/94
Date


Jacqueline E. Schafer, Director
California Department of Fish & Game

3/25/96
Date


Edward Hastey, State Director
Bureau of Land Management

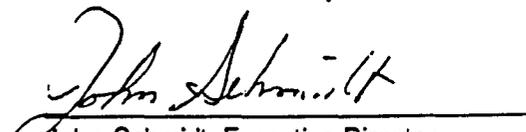
9/6/94
Date


Mike Spear, Regional Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

8/23/96
Date


Steve McCormick, Vice President
The Nature Conservancy

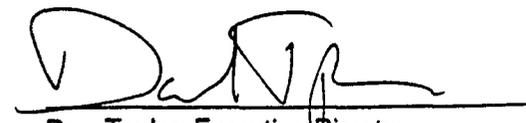
4/11/96
Date


John Schmidt, Executive Director
Wildlife Conservation Board

9/6/94
Date


Roger Patterson, Director
Bureau of Reclamation

4/4/96
Date


Dan Taylor, Executive Director
California Field Office
National Audubon Society

3/25/96
Date

Robert Hight

Robert Hight, Executive Director
California State Lands Commission

9-6-94

Date

Ron Stromstad

Ron Stromstad, Director of Operations
Ducks Unlimited

8/28/96

Date

Stanley T. Albright

Stanley T. Albright, Field Director
Pacific West Field Office
National Park Service

9-11-96

Date

Anne Kinsinger

Anne Kinsinger, Director
California Science Center
Biological Resources Division, USGS

9-17-96

Date

Hershel R. Read

Hershel R. Read, State Conservationist
Natural Resource Conservation Service

8/1/96

Date

David Kennedy

Mr. David Kennedy, Director
California Department of Water Resources

3-3-98

Date

Amos Eno

Mr. Amos Eno, Executive Director
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

24 March 98

Date

APPENDIX 2

RIPARIAN HABITAT JOINT VENTURE A project of California Partners in Flight

The California Partners in Flight group launched the ambitious Riparian Habitat Joint Venture (RHJV) project in 1994. Eighteen federal, state and private organizations have signed the landmark cooperative agreement to protect and enhance habitats for native landbirds throughout California. The RHJV, modeled after the successful Joint Venture projects of the North American Waterfowl Plan, reinforces other collaborative efforts currently underway which protect biodiversity and enhance natural resources as well as the human element they support.

Riparian habitats were a clear first priority for a Joint Venture because they have the highest diversity and productivity of landbirds of any terrestrial habitat type in the western United States. Deciduous riparian forests, comprised mostly of willow, alder, cottonwood and dense undergrowth bordering streams and lakes, have largely been lost to stream channelization, development, logging, grazing, and water diversion throughout the west. Only 5% to 10% of California's original (pre-European contact) riparian habitat exists today and the remaining portions continue to be developed or destroyed.

The RHJV goal is to conserve, increase, and improve riparian habitat to protect and enhance California's native resident birds and neotropical migratory birds. By developing a coordinated statewide effort, increasingly fragmented habitat patches will be connected and enlarged with an extensive network of riparian forests capable of supporting viable breeding populations of native birds. A wide variety of other species of plants and animals will benefit through the protection of forests along our rivers, streams and lakes. The six objectives of the RHJV are:

- 1) Compile existing information on riparian habitat throughout the state to identify key riparian areas, as well as information gaps. Promote and coordinate efforts to obtain the information.
- 2) Develop guidelines for the protection of existing riparian habitat on public lands and recommend alternatives for protection of habitat on private lands.
- 3) Restore riparian habitat on public and private lands using commonly accepted, scientifically valid restoration techniques.
- 4) Enhance the productivity and biodiversity of riparian communities using appropriate management techniques.
- 5) Establish a network of high-quality riparian habitats throughout California to enhance and protect native birds.
- 6) Educate the general public and resource managers about the value of California's riparian habitat.

Major efforts are already underway to develop bird conservation plans for fourteen riparian-associated bird species which will serve as indicators of a range of riparian habitat conditions; to describe characteristics of riparian habitat needed to maintain healthy populations of these species; to identify sites throughout the state key to maintaining healthy bird populations; and to train a cadre of volunteers to monitor these sites for their long-term health and viability.

Member agencies and organizations of the RHJV include: The Resources Agency, California Department of Fish and Game, Wildlife Conservation Board, California State Lands Commission, California Department of Water Resources, Natural Resource Conservation Service, National Audubon Society, Point Reyes Bird Observatory, Kern River Research Center, Ducks Unlimited, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, U.S.D.A. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Reclamation, National Park Service, U.S. Geological Service. The RHJV Implementation Board consists of designees from the six conservation organizations; agencies serve as ex officio advisory members to the Board. Broader participation is sought and other groups will be encouraged to join the team as the effort expands throughout the state. The RHJV, by committing the major state and federal agencies to songbird conservation, will generate greater action and achieve more than could ever be accomplished if the partners worked individually.

For more information about the RHJV, contact Lyann Comrack, Coordinator at 555 Audubon Place, Sacramento, CA 95825; telephone (916) 481-5577; FAX (916) 481-4283.

RHJV- rev . 15 May 98

Mr. Rick Breitenbach
CALFED Bay-DELTA Program

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