

Draft Meeting Notes  
CALFED Bay-Delta Program Levee and Channel Technical Team  
August 8, 1996 at 9:00 am in room 1601 of the Resources Building

Attendance List:

Technical Team:

Curt Schmutte (chair), DWR  
Gilbert Cosio, MBK consultants  
Larry Lee, Rec Board  
Margit Aramburu, Delta Protection Comm  
Alex Hildebrand, South Delta Water Agency  
Tom Zuckerman, Central Delta Water Agency  
Chris Neudeck, KSN consultants  
Ed Littrell, Fish and Game  
Steve Deverel, private consultant  
Sina Darabzand, DWR  
AnnMarie Parkin, DWR  
Bill Forsythe, DWR  
Ray McDowell, DWR  
Les Harder, DWR  
Ralph Torres, DWR  
Kent Nelson, DWR  
Dave Lawson, DWR  
Matt Vandenberg, USFWS  
Pat Brantley, Fish and Game  
Bruce Herbold, EPA  
Karl Winkler, DWR

CALFED Staff/Consulting Team:

Victor Pacheco  
Michael Norris (minutes)  
Michelle Wong  
Niall McCarten, Jones and Stokes  
Don Wagenet, Tetra Tech  
Loren Bottorff, CH2MHill  
Bob Masterson, Woodward Clyde

Guests:

Bill Betchart, private consultant  
Mary Hildebrand

Curt convened the meeting and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

There were no comments on the minutes for the 4-29-96 Levee and Channel Technical Team meeting.

Curt reviewed the handout for the CALFED Bay-Delta Program Organizational chart and discussed how the Levee and Channel Technical Team fits into the overall picture.

Curt said the task at hand is to form "sub-teams" so that the larger group doesn't have to hammer out the specific issues.

Curt called on Victor Pacheco to discuss how the Levee and Channel Technical Team fits into

the CALFED process and Victor discussed the matter. Victor said the Delta Long-Term Levee Improvement Plan will be a component that will fit into the CALFED process. Victor want the Levee and Channel Technical Team to specifically define elements of the Plan for the impact analysis phase. Victor said we're trying to go from the "general improvement plan" to something more specific and the refinement process starts in October. As an example, Victor said the proposed habitat improvements the Levee and Channel Technical Team might make should be in coordination with those from the Agency Ecosystem Review Team (AERT) and the BDAC Ecosystem Workgroup.

Kent Nelson asked what the difference was between the AERT and the BDAC Ecosystem Workgroup and Victor said the workgroup dealt with policy issues and the AERT dealt with more specific issues. There is a little bit of overlap and Dick Daniel is coordinating both teams.

Alex Hildebrand said that technical issues and policy issues are not dealt with adequately at this time. Policy issues need to be dealt with "head on" according to Alex and brought to BDAC's attention. An example of one of those issues according to Alex is the proposed conversion of ag use to wetlands. Curt said he would try and point out items that clearly go beyond the technical phase and are more policy oriented.

Curt said that the levee component is like one leg on a table with the other 3 legs being water quality, water supply, and ecosystem benefits. Without the levee component, we won't achieve the benefits to the other 3 components. Also, Curt said we will be looking at providing recreational benefits with proposed levee improvements in the future.

Curt discussed Assembly Bill (AB) 360 and the levee benefits it will provide and also Proposition 204 which will be on the November ballot. Prop 204, if passed by the voters, will provide 2 more years of funding after SB 34 expires in 1998 and will fund improvements to "project" levee systems too.

Curt said we need to set up a sub-team dealing with habitat corridors. Niall McCarten will be the consultant doing the work. The sub-team will hopefully come up with something that is acceptable to the Levee and Channel Technical Team as well as AERT and the BDAC Ecosystem Workgroup.

Alex asked what part of the levee Curt was talking about with respect to habitat because its hard to maintain a levee with habitat on top of it. Margit said that shaded riverine habitat (SRA) is not acceptable with the present nonproject levee guidelines. Alex said we need to address a policy question regarding habitat on the levee as opposed to adjacent to the levee. Kent Nelson said conditions described in the "vegetation management guidelines" describe the maximum habitat distribution allowed by FEMA and the Office of Emergency Services (OES) that will still allow adequate inspection of the levee. According to Kent, reclamation districts can at their discretion remove habitat from the tops of levees to meet or exceed those guidelines.

Ed said he doesn't like the term "levee habitat" and he prefers the term "levee associated habitat".

Tom Zuckerman said that task 1 should be to maintain the flood control performance of levee systems and that priorities seem to get mixed up with bifurcation of other issues. Curt said that if we only focused on flood control, then we would not likely have as much success when it came time to present our product as opposed to having a more broad-based approach. Curt said our process needs to be “win-win” for everyone.

Tom said the levee habitat improvement cross-section is fine but there’s no way we’re going to see 200-miles of those types of levee improvements. Curt agreed but said the wall map and cross-sections are a useful starting point because we could see those types of improvements in specific areas.

Curt said we need to form sub-teams for “levee associated habitat,” “land subsidence,” “beneficial reuse,” “seismic susceptibility,” and “emergency response.” Margit asked about the need to also form a group to look at the specific shapes of levee cross sections and Curt said a lot of time was spent on that item during the old Bay Delta Oversight Council (BDOC) process. Curt discussed a Delta Levees and Channels report that was prepared as part of that BDOC process. Alex agreed the report was prepared but said that the BDOC work materials were not brought to the attention of the Bay Delta Advisory Council (BDAC) which took over. CALFED staff agreed to pursue Alex’s request for BDAC notification.

Alex asked about meshing “flexibility” and “financing”. He noted we could come up with proposed levee improvement that would work fine in the central Delta but would not work where he lives in the south Delta where levee don’t overtop and undergo subsidence but rather “blow out”.

There was some more discussion on the BDOC Delta Levees and Channels report from October of 1994 and Victor said the report was made available to anyone that requested it. Those in attendance who wanted a copy of the report were later provided with one and Alex was given several to distribute to BDAC members. Victor said that levee work from the old BDOC process was actually used to come up with cost estimates for proposed levee improvements in the more recent CALFED alternatives.

Kent said that policy issues need to be addressed as Alex noted before the technical teams dive into their work. Margit thought the work the habitat sub-team will be doing will cross into the policy realm. Bruce Herbold wondered what the Levees and Channel Technical Team can accomplish by talking about policy issues when those types of questions should be dealt with at the BDAC level. Bruce felt the group needed to stay focused on technical issues.

Curt then divided up the five sub-teams as follows:

1. Levee Associated Habitat Sub-Team: Ed Littrell (chair), Gilbert Cosio, Kent, Matt Vandenburg, Pat Brantley, and Niall McCartent (consultant leading work effort).
2. Land Subsidence Sub-Team: Curt (chair), Steve Deverel, Chris Neudeck, Margit, and John Winther.
3. Beneficial Reuse Sub-Team: Lynn O’Leary, Steve Goldbeck, Curt, and one Regional Board representative yet to be selected.

4. Seismic Susceptibility Sub-Team: Ralph Torres (chair), John Winther, Lynn O'Leary, and a representative from the USGS yet to be selected.
5. Emergency Response Sub-Team: Chris Neudeck, Gilbert Cosio, Tom Zuckerman, Karl Winkler, and a representative from the Corps of Engineers regulatory section yet to be selected as well as a representative with a biological background yet to be selected.

Curt discussed the handout outlining the tasks of the Levee Associated Habitat Sub-Team. Ed Littrell asked about policy issues related to levee associated habitat and Curt said that should be put on the list as task "1A".

Gilbert wondered whether the issue of shallow flooding of islands needs to be dealt with by the Levee and Channel Technical Team. Curt stated it could be dealt with in the subsidence sub-team and coordinated with other CALFED technical teams.

Curt continued on with the tasks of the Levee Associated Habitat Sub-Team and added items within tasks as the group felt appropriate. Curt felt the sub-team should make revisions to the habitat wall map by October although Margit felt that the wall map was more of a policy issue. Ed felt the same way and noted the map does not mitigate "in-kind" which is not necessarily a bad thing but still technically violates Fish and Game policy. Curt said the sub-team would not be bound by the map. Bruce Herbold said the map actually does not violate Fish and Game policy because it does not deal with mitigation. The map was a culmination of a "yoemans" effort and was a great start. Curt added that CALFED is much more than mitigation.

Tom said the thing we need to avoid is suggesting that every mile of levee can look like the charts. Rather, Tom said we need to start by telling reclamation districts "this is what a flood control levee looks like" and then note what we can do to add on to it. Tom said we shouldn't show the wall diagram maps to poor reclamation districts so that they end up applying for a project only to find out they won't get it.

Les asked if all levees will be treated the same and Curt said that was discussed back and forth during the BDOC process. Curt briefly discussed various features that could be used in levee prioritization.

Curt briefly discussed the tasks the Land Subsidence Sub-Team will do and said a map showing strips of land adjacent to levees that are suitable for subsidence control measures would ultimately be the product that is desired.

Tom wondered whether seismic susceptibility, beneficial reuse, and land subsidence issues should be dealt with by one committee rather than three because of overlapping issues and Curt agreed to the need for close coordination between the sub-teams.

Curt said that no workplan exists right now for the Beneficial Reuse Sub-Team but one will be developed and presented to the team.

Margit said the draft Long Term Management Strategy (LTMS) does not cover all the

reclamation districts. Curt asked for the meeting minutes to reflect the specific information she was referring to. Margit noted later that the specific part of LTMS she was referring to is known as "Work Element E" and it is entitled "Volume 1: Reuse-Upland Site Ranking, Analysis and Documentation, December 1994".

Curt discussed the charts dealing with seismic issues and Les said we should use the "initial damage map" for the October deadline and save work on an improved map as a later work product.

There was discussion about the seismic exposure period of 30-years and Curt said that CALFED needs to make that a policy discussion issue. Tom wondered at what level of seismic event do we get damage to dams and water distribution systems in addition to levees. Les said that the major dams have been analyzed for events like the Northridge earthquake and distribution systems like the California Aqueduct have been analyzed for seismic risk as well. Tom wondered why we haven't seen a levee failure from an earthquake and Les said that's because we haven't yet had a quake strong enough occur in the Delta. The strongest one occurred in 1906 and it was pretty far away from the Delta.

Curt said he would ask CALFED if a "risk analysis of Delta features vs. Proposed features" was appropriate for the Levee and Channel Technical Team or if that work should be saved for another group.

Bruce wondered why CALFED has only looked at system reliability in terms of levee failures as opposed to larger features such as failure of a dam. Ray McDowell briefly mentioned the levee failure probability work he has been involved with.

Tom said the Andrus Island levee failure of 1972 is the only time that a levee failure has affected water supply.

Curt moved on to the emergency response element and said that Karl Winkler was involved in putting the handout together. Curt said that AB360 has \$50,000/site and \$200,000/year for dealing with emergency response issues. He asked for everyone to review the handout and be prepared to suggest a list of tasks for the Seismic Susceptibility Sub-Team to deal with.

Karl Winkler discussed various emergency response plans that have been prepared and the connections between them. In particular, Karl noted the work that Les Harder and Ralph Torres had done with their 1992 report. Karl said there are things that can be done in mixing seismic issues with emergency response.

Guest in attendance Bill Betchart asked if an emergency response element could deal with a levee failure involving 20 to 30 Delta islands and Karl thought a 10-island failure was more realistic for what could be dealt with.

Tom wondered about all the work that has been done on levee systems in the last 10 or so years

and whether or not any form of analysis has been done to see if there is now a reduced seismic risk. Les said that item has not been looked at. Chris Neudeck said private consultants have looked at it on an individual basis such as the work on McDonald Island. Curt thought that the point Tom was making was an important policy issue for Les to consider and Karl agreed with him.

Curt said sub-teams will meet on their own and report back to the larger group. Curt set the next meeting for Wednesday, September 10.

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