

DRAFT  
Establishment of Floodways and Meander Belts

**Description**

Floodways are channels for diversion and detention of floodflows. Floodways can be established either by constructing separate bypass channels (e.g., Sutter and Yolo bypasses) or by widening existing river channels to create low-flow and floodflow portions of the channel. Meander belts are floodplains of rivers or streams where natural channel meandering is allowed to occur. The amount of riparian and seasonal wetland habitats associated with floodways and meander belts in the Delta has decreased and its connectivity has been disrupted over time as a result of waterway channelization, levee construction, and Delta land reclamation in historic floodplains. Establishment of floodways and meander belts could include all areas to be incorporated in floodways that would either be purchased, secured through conservation easements, or leased as floodway easements.

This category includes the following actions:

- relocate levees to widen floodways,
- allow river channels to meander,
- acquire Delta islands as overflow areas, and
- restore floodways as habitat corridors.

**Purpose**

Establishing floodways and meander belts is intended to restore corridors of connected seasonal wetland and riparian habitats. Increasing the quantity and quality of these habitats in the Delta would benefit associated waterfowl and other wildlife species and provide habitat for several threatened and endangered species. Reestablishing habitat corridors would benefit movement and gene flow among wildlife populations. Establishing floodways and meander belts would also increase the flood conveyance capacity of waterways.

**Constraints**

Establishing floodways and meander belts would be constrained by the need to acquire or lease land available for seasonal flooding and the cost of purchasing this land or obtaining conservation easements. Levees, other flood control features (e.g., weirs), and infrastructure would have to be relocated or reconstructed.

**Linkage to Other CALFED Action Categories**

Establishment of floodways and meander belts can be implemented to benefit riparian and wetland habitats and to provide increased levels of flood protection. In addition, improvements of

through-Delta conveyance could be designed to incorporate floodways and meander belts. If a sufficient amount of additional flood capacity were created this way, a higher carryover storage could be allowed in upstream reservoirs.