

**February 20, 2007**

**To:** David Scheuring, Chair, Water Resources Association of Yolo County and  
Members of the WRA  
Jacques DeBra and the Members of the WRA Technical Committee

**From:** Tim O'Halloran, YCFCWCD

**Subject: Yolo County Integrated Water Resources Management Plan:  
Sloughs/Canals/Creeks Integrated Project**

### **Introduction and Purpose**

This memo responds to a request made by David Scheuring and the WRA on November 21, 2006 for more information regarding the Yolo County Sloughs/Canals/Creeks Integrated Project. Specifically, the WRA asked the District to determine if additional priority setting was warranted for the list of potential actions and, if so, to work with stakeholders to refine project priorities and further define the issue of project integration. This memo documents the process and recommendations made by an ad hoc committee comprised of the District and a small group of environmental, resource agency and landowner representatives. This group met on several occasions over the last few months to discuss these issues. It should be noted that this group, and specifically the District as the lead implementing agency, considers this work to be only the beginning point of an ongoing collaborative process of prioritization, integration and implementation as outlined in the draft IRWMP document of October 2006.

### **Consolidation of Actions**

It became clear to the committee that there was much overlap in description and intent among the potential component actions described in section 5.4.10 (see pages 5-25 to 5-26). Specifically, the committee felt that the following actions were all essentially trying to accomplish the same thing.

- Environmental Enhancement of Waterways Project (AR6)
- Sloughs and Water ways Environmental Enhancement Program (AR9)
- Agricultural Drains and Sloughs Riparian Habitat Enhancement Program (AR11)
- Small Sloughs Revegetation Project (AR25)
- Canal Bank Habitat and maintenance Program (AR36)
- Small Sloughs and Creeks Invasive Vegetation Removal Program (FM38), and
- Non-native, Invasive Plant Species Removal Program (AR30)

The committee recommends that the basic intentions of these seven actions be written up as one comprehensive "small waterways" improvement and maintenance action that would describe the different flood control, water conveyance and habitat enhancement values that future activities would attempt to accomplish.

## **Grouping of Actions and Prioritization**

In order to consider an appropriate approach to prioritization, integration and implementation the committee grouped the actions into the three functional categories. These groupings are shown below with their included actions.

### Organizational

- Creation of Flood Management Division or Entity (FM35)
- Watershed Management Program (FM20)
- Ag Waiver Program (WQ14)

### Foundational & Planning

- Caltrans Highways Hydraulic Impact Assessment Program (FM11)
- County Roads Hydraulic Capacity Assessment Program (FM12)
- Cities-County Storm Drainage Criteria Update Program (FM15)
- Agricultural/Urban Storm Runoff Assessment Program (WQ4)
- Madison Storm Drainage/Flood Management Project (FM9)
- Esparto Storm Drainage/Flood Management Project (FM10)

### On-the-Ground

- The small waterways action as described above (ARXX)
- Willow Levee Improvement Project (FM26)
- Willow Slough Bypass Environmental Enhancement Project (WQ7)
- South Fork Willow Slough Riparian Restoration and Levee Setback Project (AR13)
- Chickahominy Slough Riparian Restoration and Levee Setback Project (AR19)
- Cottonwood Slough Riparian Restoration and Levee Setback Project (AR20)
- Willow Slough Habitat Enhancement Program (AR14)
- Regional Irrigation Tailwater Recovery Systems Program (WS17)
- YCFCWCD Distribution System Canal Extensions Project (WS24)

These groupings provided the committee with a logical context within which to discuss prioritization, integration and implementation. For instance, there needs to be an ongoing, sustainable framework to ensure that as projects are proposed for implementation, they are treated in a consistent manner including the input and review of all interested and affected parties. This led the committee to believe that its first priority should be to support a form of organizational structure such as that proposed in FM35 (Creation of Flood Management Division or Entity).

The committee did not consider prioritizing the activities that are grouped under the “foundational and planning” category since it felt that these actions will be developed by various entities that have overlying jurisdiction and interest in seeing them move forward. It is important these foundational and planning actions be coordinated and tracked through the entity or division to be established as part of FM35.

Many of the on-the-ground actions are in various stages of development. In fact, implementation of all of them appears to be worthwhile since they are projects potentially supported by this integrated program and the IRWMP. Actual prioritization and implementation will depend primarily on the “readiness” of each individual project to proceed. This “readiness” in turn depends on a variety of factors including landowner cooperation, design, funding and permitting.

### **Integration**

By their very nature, the waterways (sloughs, canals and creeks) of Yolo County are integrated across multiple factors described in the IRWMP. For instance, they already provide multiple flood, water supply, water quality, environmental and recreational benefits. While most of the actions described in this integrated project could be coupled with other integrated projects that are described in the draft IRWMP, they also stand on their own as a single integrated project

### **Monitoring and Measurement**

The committee discussed, and recommends to the WRA that a monitoring and measurement element be added to the program, and be required of any project being endorsed by the IRWMP. The committee recognizes that the foundational actions described in the draft IRWMP contain some monitoring components. However, in order to gain maximum knowledge about the appropriateness and efficacy of future actions, the committee recommends that each project contain monitoring, analysis and reporting components.

### **Implementation**

Much work related to the improvement and management of sloughs, canals and creeks is already in progress. Various groups such as the Yolo County Resource Conservation District, Audubon California, Yolo County Department of Public Works and the YCFCWCD are involved in planning and implementation of various projects and programs. The YCFCWCD’s role as lead agency for the WRA’s IRWMP Sloughs/Canals/Creeks Integrated Project is seen as limited to the encouragement and coordination of various proposed projects on behalf of the implementing groups. In other words, there is plenty of needed work currently underway, and the IRWMP process should only enhance and integrate, but not hinder, these efforts.