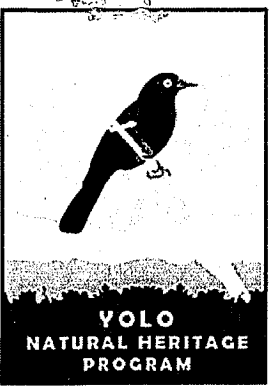


YOLO NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM

~ Partnering for conservation ~



March 20, 2009

Secretary Mike Chrisman
Undersecretary Karen Scarborough
California Natural Resources Agency
Bay Delta Conservation Plan Steering Committee members
1416 9th Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Member Agencies:

County of Yolo

City of Davis

City of Winters

City of West Sacramento

City of Woodland

*University of California,
Davis*

Secretary Chrisman, Undersecretary Scarborough, and Committee members:

Yolo County, its incorporated cities, and the University of California at Davis (jointly the "Yolo Habitat JPA") are developing a county-wide, multi-species HCP/NCCP known as the Yolo Natural Heritage Program (YNHP). Substantial public and private investment has been made to date on this effort and we anticipate plan approval in the spring of 2010. The Yolo Natural Heritage Program is expected to provide regulatory and conservation benefits for more than 65 special status and at risk species that inhabit five natural communities in Yolo County. Eight other landscape level conservation efforts are in various stages of completion between Lake Tahoe and San Francisco Bay. Yolo County, located midway between Tahoe and San Francisco, is strategically important to the completion of this meaningful habitat corridor in Northern California.

The JPA commends the state and its partners on the decision to engage in serious discussions regarding the health of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta through development of the Bay Delta Conservation Plan. We have been advised by staff to the Bay Delta Conservation Plan that the most reliable way to convey information to the BDCP process is in writing. This letter serves two purposes: to provide the JPA's comments and concerns to date relative to the developing BDCP, and to request that the BDCP and the JPA establish a formal coordinating structure where opportunities and conflicts can be addressed efficiently and to our mutual benefit. The JPA is ready to engage in this effort and looks forward to discussing how we move forward productively.

The BDCP and YNHP share an approximately 90,920 acre planning overlap area that provides functional habitat for several species of interest to both planning efforts. These include giant garter snake, Swainson's hawk, and valley elderberry longhorn beetle, as well as grasslands and seasonal wetland communities. The habitat values within the overlap area are critical to the viability of several at risk species, including near endemic plants that could be impacted by BDCP-related habitat conversions unless careful analysis is undertaken early in the planning process. The overlap

planning area also supports habitat friendly agriculture and the Vic Fazio Wildlife Area, two highly valued assets that we believe should be preserved.

While we expect that our mutual interests will continue to evolve, at this time the JPA offers the following specific comments:

Habitat

To ensure compatibility between the two plans we recommend that BDCP conservation objectives be coordinated early with the YNHP where we share common species needs. The YNHP has assembled a robust data set and is ready to engage in this discussion. Unavoidable habitat conversions resulting from BDCP actions must be fully mitigated. This includes mitigation for impacts to terrestrial species as well as for the loss of agricultural resources. BDCP and YNHP should each apply standardized mitigation ratios in the overlap area to ensure that equitable outcomes and benefits are realized. BDCP and YNHP implementing strategies should be coordinated as both planning efforts continue to evolve so that neither plan overshadows the other. We request that BDCP support our efforts to retain vegetated levees within the YNHP planning area boundary. The JPA supports the continued viability of the Vic Fazio Wildlife Area and requests that BDCP avoid impacts to this important habitat resource.

Agriculture

The production of rice within and outside of the Yolo Bypass is essential to the successful implementation of the YNHP because it provides habitat benefits to several YNHP species, including giant garter snake. We are concerned that BDCP proposals to inundate the Yolo Bypass for the benefit of fish species will compromise future production of rice in the Bypass, and by extension throughout the county. We ask that BDCP carefully evaluate proposals in the Bypass and where practical avoid sensitive biological resources and agricultural operations that provide species benefits. BDCP must provide regulatory assurances for landowners adjacent to BDCP habitat project areas. County revenue losses and increased public cost burdens associated with BDCP actions must be fully accounted for and mitigated.

Permitting

The JPA requests that the following projects be added to the BDCP covered activities list. These projects are proximate to Delta waters and would benefit from regulatory permitting anticipated in the BDCP that cannot be achieved in the YNHP. We can provide detailed information on the scope of these activities upon request.

Davis/Woodland/UCD surface water project.

Davis/Woodland wastewater discharge project

Port of Sacramento

Restoration and habitat enhancements undertaken in the YNHP that have the potential to impact BDCP target species

We realize that BDCP is on an accelerated timeline and are willing to marshal resources to ensure that our proposal does not impede BDCP progress. Because the YNHP and BDCP are expected to produce final plan documents within the same time frame we trust that our request will be considered expeditiously.

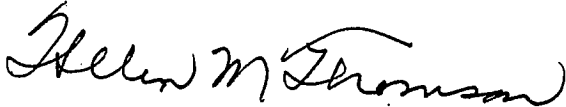
Secretary Chrisman.

March 20, 2009

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Please contact me or Maria Wong, JPA Executive Director, with any questions you have. I look forward to scheduling our first meeting at the earliest opportunity.

Cordially,



Helen M. Thomson
Chairwoman, Yolo County HCP/NCCP Joint Powers Agency

cc: Senator Lois Wolk
Assemblymember Mariko Yamada
Mayor Cabaldon, City of West Sacramento
Mayor Davies, City of Woodland
Mayor Asmundson, City of Davis
Mayor Martin, City of Winters
Chair McGowan, Yolo County Board of Supervisors
Chancellor Vanderhoef, University of California, Davis