



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office
2800 Cottage Way, Room W-2605
Sacramento, California 95825-1846

In Reply Refer To:
08ESMF00-2013-CPA-0020

SEP 20 2013

E. Scott Clark
Acting Chief, Planning Division
Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District
1325 J Street
Sacramento, California 95825-2922

Dear Mr. Clark:

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (Corps) has requested coordination under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (FWCA) for the American River Common Features General Re-evaluation Report (GRR) project. The proposed flood risk management construction would occur along the lower American River and the Sacramento River in Sacramento County, California. The enclosed report constitutes the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's draft FWCA report for the proposed project.

We would appreciate any comments on this draft report from the Corps or agencies listed below by November 1, 2013, so that they can be addressed in the final report.

If you have any questions regarding this report on the proposed project, please contact Amber Aguilera, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, at (916) 414-6577.

Sincerely,

Daniel Welsh
Assistant Field Supervisor

cc:
Elizabeth Holland, COE, Sacramento, CA
Tina Bartlett, CDFW, Rancho Cordova, CA
Howard Brown, NOAA Fisheries, Sacramento, CA

FISH AND WILDLIFE COORDINATION ACT REPORT
AMERICAN RIVER COMMON FEATURES
GENERAL RE-EVALUATION REPORT PROJECT

SEPTEMBER 2013

BACKGROUND

In February 1986, major storms in northern California caused record flows along the American River. Water releases from Folsom Reservoir into the American River, in combination with high flows on the Sacramento River, almost caused catastrophic flooding to the city of Sacramento and surrounding areas. The result of the February 1986 storms raised concerns over the adequacy of the existing flood control system, which led to a series of investigations to provide additional flood protection to the Sacramento area.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) completed an initial feasibility study in December 1991 for the American River and Natomas Basin areas. The feasibility report recommended the construction of a concrete gravity flood detention dam just downstream of the confluence of the North and Middle Forks of the American River, and for levee improvements downstream of Folsom Dam. Due to environmental and cost concerns, Congress chose not to authorize the proposed detention dam and instead directed the Corps to supplement the analysis of flood control options considered in the 1991 study.

A supplemental study was completed and presented in the *Supplemental Information Report American River Watershed Project, California*, dated March 1996. The report presented three possible flood control plans: (1) the construction of the concrete gravity flood detention dam recommended in the 1991 report; (2) Folsom Dam improvements; and (3) a stepped release plan for Folsom Dam releases. The report also concluded that levee improvements downstream of Folsom Dam were needed and that these levee improvements were “common” to all three plans. Under the Water Resources Development Act of 1996 (WRDA 96), Congress authorized the American River Common Features Project (Common Features Project), which included levee modifications on both banks of the American River, levee modifications along the east bank of the Sacramento River downstream from the Natomas Cross Canal, installation of streamflow gauges upstream from Folsom Reservoir, modification of the flood warning system along the lower American River, and continued interim reoperation of Folsom Reservoir for flood control.

In 1999, Congress decided to authorize improvements to Folsom Dam to control a 200-year flood event with a peak release of 160,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) from the dam. By doing this, improvements to levees downstream of Folsom Dam could be fine-tuned to work closely with the Folsom Dam improvements being discussed by Congress. Subsequently, the Common Features Project was modified by the Water Resources Development Act of 1999 (WRDA 99) to include additional features so the American River could safely convey an emergency release of 160,000 cfs. Also authorized under WRDA 99 was the Folsom Dam Modification project, which would allow for larger releases from Folsom Dam earlier in a flood event. At the same time, Congress also directed the Corps to review additional modifications to the flood storage of Folsom Dam to maximize the use of the dam for flood damage reduction prior to consideration

of any additional storage on the American River. The Folsom Dam Raise project was subsequently authorized by Congress in 2004.

Major construction components for the Common Features Project under the WRDA 96 authorization include construction of seepage remediation along about 22 miles of the American River levees. Under the WRDA 99 authorization, the major construction components include construction of seepage remediation and levee raises along four stretches of the American River. All Common Features Project features authorized under WRDA 96 and WRDA 99 have been constructed or are in design analysis for construction, and the Service has previously coordinated with the Corps on the various aspects of the Common Features Project.

Deep under-seepage became a significant concern along the American River levees following a flood event in 1997. Since the levee improvements along the American River were still in the design phase, remediation of deep under-seepage needed to be included in the design plans. This additional effort led to considerable cost increases over what was originally authorized by Congress for the Common Features Project, including the WRDA 99 improvements that had already increased the cost of the original WRDA 96 authorization.

The Folsom Dam Post Authorization Change Report and the Economic Re-evaluation Report for Folsom Dam Improvements revealed that additional levee improvements were needed on the American and Sacramento Rivers in order to truly capture the benefits of the Folsom Dam projects. These levee deficiencies consisted primarily of erosion concerns on the American River, and seepage, stability, erosion, and height deficiencies on the Sacramento River downstream of its confluence with the American River. However, the full extent of these levee deficiencies was not known and additional re-evaluation studies were needed for the flood basins that comprise the city of Sacramento.

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT AREA

The project area is located along the Sacramento and American River watersheds. The Sacramento River watershed covers 26,000 square miles in central and northern California. Major tributaries of the Sacramento River include the Feather, Yuba, and American Rivers. The American River watershed covers about 2,100 square miles northeast of Sacramento and includes portions of Placer, El Dorado, Alpine, and Sacramento counties. The American River watershed includes Folsom Dam and Folsom Reservoir; inflowing rivers and streams, including the North, South and Middle forks of the American River; and the American River downstream to its confluence with the Sacramento River in the city of Sacramento. The Sacramento and American rivers form a flood plain covering roughly 110,000 acres at their confluence. This flood plain includes most of the developed portions of the city of Sacramento.

The American River Common Features GRR study area includes: about 12 miles of the north and south banks of the American River immediately upstream of its confluence with the Sacramento River; the east bank of the Natomas East Main Drainage Canal (NEMDC), Dry Creek, Robla Creek, Arcade Creek, and the Magpie Creek Diversion Channel (collectively referred to as the East Side Tributaries); the east bank of the Sacramento River downstream from the American River to the town of Freeport, where the levee ties into the Beach Lake levee; and

the Sacramento Weir and Bypass, which is located along the north edge of the city of West Sacramento.

Within the greater project area, there are four distinct flood basins: the American River North Basin, the American River South Basin, the Sacramento Bypass and the Natomas Basin. These basins are described in further detail below.

The American River North Basin is located north of the American River and east of the city of Natomas, and includes the North Sacramento and Arden Arcade communities. Project construction in this basin includes the levees on the north bank of the American River, levees on the east bank of NEMDC, and levees along Arcade Creek, Dry/Robla Creek, and the Magpie Creek Diversion Channel.

The American River South Basin is located south of the American River and east of the Sacramento River. Communities protected by these project levees include Downtown Sacramento, Land Park, Pocket-Meadowview, East Sacramento, South Sacramento and Rancho Cordova. Project construction in this basin would be limited to the south bank of the American River and the east bank of the Sacramento River.

The Sacramento Bypass is located in Yolo County, about 4 miles west of the city of Sacramento and along the northern edge of the city of West Sacramento. The Sacramento Weir runs along the west bank of the Sacramento River and connects the river to the Bypass. The Bypass is located in a rural area owned by the State of California and operated as the Sacramento Bypass Wildlife Area.

The Natomas Basin is located in the northern portion of the study area and is located east of the Sacramento River, west of NEMDC, and north of the American River. The Natomas Basin is considered to be a part of the study area, as described by the GRR; however, the proposed measures to raise the height of the Natomas Basin levees were previously analyzed in the Natomas Levee Improvement Program, Phase 4b Landside Improvements Project (NLIP Phase 4b Project) in 2010. Therefore, the Natomas Basin will not be analyzed in this document.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The purpose of the Common Features GRR is to determine if there is a Federal interest in modifying the authorized Common Features Project for flood risk management in the greater Sacramento area. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) evaluation is required when a major Federal action is under consideration and may have impacts on the quality of the natural and human environment. The Corps has determined that the proposed project may have significant effects on the environment and therefore, an EIS and a Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (FWCA) report is required.

The Common Features GRR has identified a number of problems associated with the flood risk management system protecting the city of Sacramento and surrounding areas. There is a high probability that flows in the American and Sacramento rivers would stress the network of levees protecting Sacramento to the point that levees could fail. The consequences of such a levee

failure would be catastrophic since the area inundated by flood water is highly urbanized and the flooding could be up to 20 feet deep. Geotechnical investigations and field surveys identified the following problems within the city of Sacramento's levee system:

- Seepage and Under-seepage
- Levee Erosion
- Levee Stability
- Levee Overtopping
- Access for Maintenance and Flood Fighting
- Vegetation and Encroachments
- Releases from Folsom Dam
- Floodplain Management
- Additional Upstream Storage from Existing Reservoirs

A wide variety of management measures were developed and then evaluated and screened to address the planning objectives to remedy the Sacramento area levee problems. Formulation strategies were then developed to address various combinations of the planning objectives and planning constraints. The formulation strategies used to address the objectives and constraints included measures to reduce flood stages, address seepage and underseepage, address stability, address erosion, address maintenance/emergency response access, and achieve the urban levee level of protection. Based upon these strategies, various combinations of the measures were assembled to form an array of preliminary plans. The preliminary plans were then evaluated, screened, and reformulated, resulting in a final array of alternatives. From this final array of alternatives, a tentatively selected plan was identified.

No Action Alternative

The Corps is required to consider a No Action Alternative as one of the alternatives for selection in order to comply with the requirements of NEPA. With the No Action Alternative, it is assumed that no additional features would be implemented by the Corps or by local interests to achieve the planning objectives over and above those elements of the previously authorized Common Features Project.

Under the No Action Alternative the Corps would not conduct any additional work to address seepage, slope stability, overtopping, or erosion concerns in the Sacramento metropolitan area. As a result, if a high flow event were to occur, the Sacramento area would remain at risk of a possible levee failure.

The urban development within the project area would continue to be at risk of flooding and lives would continue to be threatened. The levees within the study area could fail and result in a catastrophic disaster. If a levee failure were to occur, major government facilities would be impacted until the flood waters recede. Workers would be unable to perform their duties until the buildings are restored and could be re-occupied. This could cause a temporary shutdown or slowdown of many State, Federal, and local government functions. Within the study area are many transportation corridors that could be flooded as well if the levees were to fail.

Alternative 1: Fix Levees in Place

Alternative 1 involves the construction of fix-in-place levee remediation measures to address seepage, stability, erosion, and overtopping concerns identified for the American and Sacramento river levees, and the East Side Tributaries. In addition, Alternative 1 would include levee raises for the Natomas Basin, which were analyzed under NEPA in the NLIP Phase 4b Project EIS/EIR in 2010. As a result, this FWCA report incorporates the analysis of the levee raise by reference, but is not discussed within this report.

Due to the urban nature and proximity of existing development within the American River North and South Basins, Alternative 1 proposes fix in place remediation. The purpose of this alternative would be to improve the flood damage reduction system to safely convey flows to a level that maximizes net benefits. Table 1 summarizes the levee problems discussed above and the proposed remediation measure for each waterway.

Table 1. Alternative 1 Proposed Levee Improvement Measures by Waterway

Waterway	Seepage Measures	Stability Measures	Erosion Protection Measures	Overtopping Measures
American River ¹	—	—	Bank Protection, Launchable Rock Trench	—
Sacramento River	Cutoff Wall	Cutoff Wall	Bank Protection, Launchable Rock Trench	Levee Raise
NEMDC	Cutoff Wall	Cutoff Wall	—	Floodwall
Arcade Creek	Cutoff Wall	Cutoff Wall	—	Floodwall
Dry and Robla Creeks	—	—	—	Floodwall
Magpie Creek	—	—	—	Floodwall

In addition to the proposed levee improvement measures shown in Table 1, the following measures and policies would be addressed during construction.

- The Corps' standard levee footprint would be established during construction of structural improvements on all levees that are out of compliance. The standard levee footprint consists of a 20 foot crown width, a 3H:1V waterside slope, and a 2H:1V landside slope, when possible. If the 3H:1V waterside slope is not possible, than a minimum 2H:1V waterside slope would be established instead.
- A 10 foot landside maintenance access would be established, when possible.

¹ Seepage, stability, and overtopping measures were addressed in the American River Common Features WRDA 96 and WRDA 99 construction projects.

- Compliance with Corps levee vegetation requirements would be established. The vegetation requirements include a 15 foot waterside, landside and vertical vegetation-free zone. When possible, a variance would be sought to allow vegetation to remain. If granted, the variance would allow for vegetation to remain on the lower waterside slope and within the waterside 15 foot vegetation-free zone. No vegetation would be permitted on the landside slope.
 - A vegetation variance would be requested to provide compliance for the Sacramento River portion of this project.
 - The erosion measures on the American River is not considered a structural fix, as these measures do not impact the structure of the levee, therefore the vegetation in this portion of the project would not be addressed under the Common Features GRR project. American River vegetation compliance would occur under a System-Wide Improvement Framework by the local sponsors.
 - The East Side Tributaries would be brought into vegetation compliance during construction in those levee reaches.
- Utility encroachments would be brought into compliance with Corps policy. Utilities that penetrate the levee would be removed and replaced with one of two fixes: a surface line over the levee prism or a through-levee line equipped with positive closure devices.
- Private encroachments would be removed by the non-Federal local sponsor or property owner prior to construction.

There would be no proposed measures under Alternative 1 for the Sacramento Bypass. The following sections contain more detailed information on the specific measures proposed by waterway under Alternative 1.

American River

Levees along the American River under Alternative 1 require improvements to address erosion. The proposed measures for these levees consist of waterside armoring to prevent erosion to the river bank and levee, which could potentially undermine the levee foundation. There are two measures proposed to address erosion on the American River levees: bank protection and a launchable rock trench. Both of these measures are described in detail in the subsections below. These measures would be implemented for all of the proposed alternatives discussed in this document.

Bank Protection

This measure consists of placing rock protection on the river's bank, and in some locations, on the levee slope to prevent erosion. The location of rock placement would be based on site-specific analysis. When necessary, the eroded portion of the bank would be filled and compacted prior to the rock placement. The sites would be prepared by clearing and stripping

the site prior to construction. Small vegetation and deleterious materials would be removed. In most cases large vegetation would be permitted to remain at these sites. Temporary access ramps would be constructed, if needed, using imported borrow material that would be trucked to the site.

Revetment would be imported from an offsite location via haul trucks and temporarily stored at a staging area located in the immediate vicinity of the construction site. A loader would be used to move revetment from the staging area to the excavator that would be placing material. The revetment would be placed at a slope varying from 2V:1H to 3V:1H, depending on the site specific conditions. A large rock berm would be placed in the water up to an elevation slightly above the mean summer water surface and a planting trench would be established on the rock berm surface for re-vegetation purposes. An excavator would either be working from the top of bank placing revetment on the bank and in the water, or from on top of the rock berm that is established.

Launchable Rock Trench

The launchable rock filled trench is designed to deploy once erosion has removed the bank material beneath it. All launchable rock trenches would be constructed outside of the natural river channel. The vegetation would be removed from the footprint of the trench and the levee slope prior to excavation. The trench configuration would include a 2H:1V landslide slope and a 1H:1V waterside slope, and would be excavated at the toe of the existing levee. All soil removed during trench excavation would be stockpiled for reuse or disposed of. The bottom of the trench would be constructed close to the summer mean water surface elevation in order to reduce the rock launching distance and the amount of rock required.

After excavation, the trench would be filled with revetment that would be imported from an off-site location via haul trucks. After rock placement, the trench would be covered with a minimum of 3 feet of stockpiled soil for a planting berm. Rock placed on the levee slope would be covered with 2 feet of stockpiled soil. All disturbed areas would be reseeded with native grasses and small shrubs where appropriate. Trees would be permitted on the berm if planted outside the specified vegetation free zone.

Sacramento River

Levees along the Sacramento River require improvements to address seepage, stability, and erosion. In addition, these levees require height improvements in order to convey additional flows that exceed the current design levels. To provide access for levee construction, inspection, maintenance, monitoring, and flood-fighting, some properties would need to be acquired.

Where the existing levee does not meet the levee design requirements, slope flattening, crown widening, and/or a levee raise is required. This improvement measure addresses problems with slope stability, geometry, overtopping, and levee access. To begin levee embankment grading, the area would be cleared, grubbed, stripped, and where necessary, portions of the existing embankment would be excavated to allow for bench cuts and keyways to tie in additional embankment fill. Excavated and borrow material from nearby borrow sites would be stockpiled

at staging areas. Haul trucks and front end loaders would bring borrow materials to the site, which would then be spread evenly and compacted according to levee design plans.

The existing levee centerline would be shifted landward, where necessary, in order to meet the Corps' current levee footprint requirements; or, in order to construct the levee to the existing footprint, a retaining wall may be constructed at the landside levee toe. This measure would raise the levee landward of the existing levee without reducing the levee crown width or disturbing the waterside slope. Retaining walls would range from 4 to 6 feet high and would require landside slope benching to establish the additional fill into the levee section. The levee crown patrol road would be re-established and a new road at the levee toe would be added 10 feet landward of the retaining wall.

Cutoff Walls

To address seepage concerns, a cutoff wall would be constructed through the levee crown. The cutoff wall would be installed by one of two methods: conventional open trench cutoff walls or deep soil mixing (DSM) cutoff walls. The method of cutoff wall selected for each reach would depend on the depth of the cutoff wall needed to address seepage. The open trench method can be used to install a cutoff wall to a depth of about 85 feet. For cutoff walls of greater depth, the DSM method would be utilized.

Prior to construction of the cutoff wall, the construction site and staging areas would be cleared, grubbed, and stripped. The levee crown would be degraded to about half of the levee height to create a large enough working platform (about 30 feet) and to reduce the risk of hydraulically fracturing the levee embankment from the insertion of slurry fluids.

Open Trench Cutoff Walls

Under the open trench method, a trench 3 feet wide would be excavated at the top of levee centerline and into the subsurface materials up to 85 feet deep with a long boom excavator. As the trench is excavated, it is filled with low density temporary bentonite water slurry to prevent cave in. The soil from the excavated trench is mixed nearby with hydrated bentonite, and in some applications cement. The soil bentonite mixture is backfilled into the trench, displacing the temporary slurry. Once the slurry has hardened, it would be capped and the levee embankment would be reconstructed with impervious or semi-impervious soil.

DSM Cutoff Wall

The DSM method involves the use of a crane that supports a set of two to four mixing augers used to drill through the levee crown and subsurface to a maximum depth of about 140 feet. As the augers are inserted and withdrawn, a cement bentonite grout would be injected through the augers and mixed with native soils. An overlapping series of mixed columns would be drilled to create a continuous seepage cutoff barrier. Once the slurry has hardened, it would be capped and the levee embankment would be reconstructed with impervious or semi-impervious soil.

Bank Protection

Bank protection on the Sacramento River would be addressed by construction of the launchable rock trench method described for the American River above, or by standard bank protection, which consists of placing rock protection on the bank to prevent erosion. This measure entails filling the eroded portion of the bank, when necessary, and installing revetment along the waterside levee slope and streambank, from the streambed to a height determined by site-specific analysis. The sites would be prepared by removing vegetation along the levee slopes at either end of the site for construction of a temporary access ramp if needed. The ramp would then be constructed using imported borrow material that would be trucked onsite.

The placement of rock onto the levee slope would occur from atop the levee and/or from the waterside by means of barges. Rock required within the channel, both below and slightly above the water line at the time of placement, would be placed by an excavator located on a barge. Construction would require two barges: one barge would carry the excavator, while the other barge would hold the stockpile of rock to be placed on the channel slopes. Rock required on the upper portions of the slopes would be placed by an excavator located on top of the levee. Rock placement from atop the levee would require one excavator and one loader for each potential placement site. The loader brings the rock from a permitted source and stockpiles it near the levee in the construction area. The excavator then moves the rock from the stockpile to the waterside of the levee.

The revetment would be placed via the methods discussed above on existing banks at a slope varying from 2V:1H to 3V:1H, depending on site specific conditions. After revetment placement has been completed, a small planting berm would be constructed in the rock, when feasible, to allow for some re-vegetation of the site.

NEMDC

The east levee of the NEMDC requires improvements to address seepage and stability at locations where historic creeks had intersected the current levee alignment. A conventional open trench cutoff wall would be constructed at these locations to address these problems. The open trench cutoff walls would be constructed as described for the Sacramento River levee described above.

The NEMDC east levee also has height issues which would be addressed by construction of a floodwall. The floodwall would be placed at the waterside hinge point of the levee and would be designed to disturb a minimal amount of waterside slope and levee crown construction. The heights of the floodwalls vary from 1 to 4 feet, as required by water surface elevations. Constructing the floodwall raise would require doweling into the existing concrete floodwall and adding reinforced concrete to the floodwall section. The waterside slope would be re-established to its existing slope and the levee crown would grade away from the wall and be surfaced with aggregate base.

Arcade Creek

The Arcade Creek levees require improvements to address seepage, slope stability, and overtopping when the flood event exceeds the current design. A cutoff wall would also be constructed to address seepage for portions of the creek. There is a ditch adjacent to the north levee at the landside toe which provides a shortened seepage path and could affect the stability of the levee. The ditch would be replaced with a conduit or box culvert and then backfilled. This would lengthen the seepage path and improve the stability of the levee.

The majority of the levees on Arcade Creek have existing floodwalls; however, there remains a height issue in this reach. A 1 to 4 foot floodwall raise would allow the levees to pass flood events greater than the current design level. Construction of the floodwall would be consistent with the description for NEMDC above.

Dry and Robla Creeks

The Dry Creek and Robla Creek levees require improvements to address overtopping for when flood events exceed the design level. Height improvements would be made with a floodwall raise. The floodwall would be placed at the waterside hinge point of the levee and would be designed to disturb a minimal amount of waterside slope and levee crown construction. The height of the floodwalls would vary from 1 to 4 feet as required by water surface elevations. Construction of the floodwall would be consistent with the description for NEMDC above. The waterside slope would be re-established to its existing slope and the levee crown would be graded away from the wall and be surfaced with aggregate base.

Magpie Creek Diversion Channel

A number of features are proposed for the Magpie Creek Diversion Channel under Alternative 1. These features include the following:

- Strengthening the existing project levee;
- Construction of a 3 to 4 foot tall floodwall along the top of the existing levee for a distance of about 2,100 feet. Construction of the floodwall would be consistent with the description for NEMDC above;
- Construction of a new 1,000-foot-long levee along Raley Boulevard, south of the Magpie Creek bridge;
- Construction of a 79 acre flood detention basin on both sides of Raley Boulevard, primarily through the purchase of properties to preserve the existing floodplain; and
- Raley Boulevard improvements, including widening the Magpie Creek Bridge, raising the elevation of the roadway, and removing the Don Julio Creek culvert.

Alternative 2: Fix Levees in Place and Widen the Sacramento Weir and Bypass

Alternative 2 would include all of the levee improvements discussed in Alternative 1 above, except for the levee raises along the Sacramento River. Instead of the levee raises, the Sacramento Weir and Bypass would be widened to divert more flows into the Yolo Bypass. The

levees along the American River, NEMDC, Arcade Creek, Dry Creek, Robla Creek, and the Magpie Creek Diversion Channel would be improved to address identified seepage, stability, erosion, and height concerns through methods described under Alternative 1 above. The levees along the Sacramento River would be improved to address identified seepage, stability, and erosion concerns through the measures described under Alternative 1 above. Due to the urban nature of the project area and proximity of development to the levees, the majority of the levee repairs would be fixed in place.

In addition, Alternative 2 would include levee raises for the Natomas Basin. The Natomas Basin levee raises are proposed under the Common Features Project GRR for authorization; however, these measures were analyzed under NEPA for the NLIP Phase 4b Project EIS/EIR in 2010.

The following sections contain more detailed information on the specific features and reaches included in this alternative. Table 2 summarizes the levee problems discussed above and the proposed measure for each waterway.

Table 2. Alternative 2 Proposed Remediation Measures by Waterway

Waterway	Seepage Measures	Stability Measures	Erosion Protection Measures	Overtopping Measures
American River ²	—	—	Bank Protection, Launchable Rock Trench	—
Sacramento River	Cutoff Wall	Cutoff Wall	Bank Protection, Launchable Rock Trench	Sacramento Bypass and Weir Widening
NEMDC	Cutoff Wall	Cutoff Wall	—	Floodwall
Arcade Creek	Cutoff Wall	Cutoff Wall	—	Floodwall
Dry and Robla Creeks	—	—	—	Floodwall
Magpie Creek	—	—	—	Floodwall, Levee Raise

Sacramento Weir and Bypass

The existing Sacramento Weir and Bypass, which allow high flows in the Sacramento River to be diverted into the Yolo Bypass, would be expanded to roughly twice the current width to accommodate increased bypass flows. The existing north levee of the Sacramento Bypass would be degraded and a new levee would be constructed about 1,500 feet to the north. The existing Sacramento Weir would be expanded to match the wider bypass. The new north levee of the bypass would include a 300-foot-wide seepage berm on the landside, with a system of relief wells. An existing high tide relief well site near the existing north levee would be remediated by the non-Federal sponsor prior to construction.

² Seepage, stability, and overtopping measures were addressed in the American River Common Features WRDA 96 and WRDA 99 construction projects.

American River

Measures for the American River levees under Alternative 2 would address erosion. These measures were identified and described under Alternative 1 and would also be included in Alternative 2. Implementation of these measures under Alternative 2 would be consistent with the description in Alternative 1.

East Side Tributaries

Measures for NEMDC, Arcade Creek, Dry Creek, Robla Creek, and the Magpie Creek Diversion Channel under Alternative 2 would address seepage, slope stability, and erosion control. These measures were identified and described in Alternative 1 and would also be included in Alternative 2. Implementation of these measures under Alternative 2 would be consistent with the description in Alternative 1.

Sacramento River

The measures for the Sacramento River levees under Alternative 2 would be consistent with Alternative 1, with one exception. Under Alternative 1, Sacramento River levee remediation measures were proposed to address seepage, stability, erosion control, and levee height problems. Under Alternative 2, there would be no need to address the levee height problems. Therefore, the measures from Alternative 1 that would be implemented under Alternative 2 for the Sacramento River levees would include: (1) installation of cutoff walls to address seepage concerns; (2) slope reshaping to address stability concerns; and (3) bank protection or launchable rock trench measures to address erosion. The description of these measures can be found above under Alternative 1 for the Sacramento River.

BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

American River

The American River Parkway (Parkway) contains many vegetation types including riparian scrub, riparian forest, oak woodland, open water, grasslands, and some agriculture. Along the river channel, vegetation is primarily considered shaded riverine aquatic (SRA) cover. Trees adjacent to the channel are mainly oaks and cottonwoods with a thick understory of vines, berry bushes and willows.

The levee slopes along the American River are primarily covered with grasses and a few scattered trees within the levee structure. Several areas within the Parkway have been used as mitigation sites for the Corps and other agency projects for endangered species. There are also some areas within the Parkway that have been used to compensate for loss of riparian habitat or oak woodlands from other projects. Vegetation on the landside of the levee is mostly ornamentals and landscape plantings that were planted beyond the legal property and fence lines of residents.

Habitats in the project area around the American River support various wildlife species. Mammal species include mule deer, coyote, black-tailed jackrabbit, striped skunk, and a variety of rodents. Common bird species include American robin, spotted towhee, dark-eyed junco, black phoebe, California towhee, ash-throated flycatcher, northern flicker, mourning dove, California quail, house finch, American and lesser goldfinches, Bewick's and house wrens, northern mockingbird, yellow-billed magpie, red-winged and Brewer's blackbirds, oak titmouse, and Anna's hummingbird. Common raptors include red-tailed hawk, Cooper's hawk, red-shouldered hawk, American kestrel, and great horned owl. Reptile and amphibian species found within the project area include western fence lizard, gopher snake, western rattlesnake, common kingsnake, Pacific treefrog, and western toad.

The river and small backwater areas provide habitat for many water associated species such as raccoon, beaver, Canada goose, wood duck, common merganser, mallard, black phoebe, great blue heron, belted kingfisher, and common yellowthroat. The levee slopes, which are dominated by annual grassland, provide foraging habitat and cover for California ground squirrel, pocket gopher, and western meadowlark.

The lower American River supports a diverse and abundant fish community; altogether, at least 41 species of fish are known to inhabit the river (USFWS 1986). In recognition of its "outstanding and remarkable" fishery resources, the entire lower American River was included in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System in 1981, which provides some protection for these resources (USFWS 1991). Four anadromous species are important from a commercial and recreational perspective. The lower river supports a large run of fall-run Chinook salmon, a species with both commercial and recreational values. The salmon run is sustained by natural reproduction in the river, and by hatchery production at the Nimbus Salmon and Steelhead Hatchery, operated by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). The average annual production of fall-run Chinook salmon in the American River from 1992-2009 is 109,574 (USFWS 2013).

Steelhead, a popular sport fish, are largely sustained in the river by production from the Nimbus Hatchery, because summer water temperatures often exceed the tolerances of juvenile steelhead, which typically spend about 1 year in the river. American shad and striped bass enter the river to spawn; these two species, introduced into the Sacramento River system in the late 1800s, now support popular sport fisheries. In addition to species of economic interest, the lower American River supports many nongame species, including Sacramento pikeminnow, Sacramento sucker, tule perch, and hardhead (USFWS 1994).

NEMDC

This canal is a narrow channel with many trees in the lower portion. As the canal heads north the channel widens and becomes less vegetated. The levee slopes on the east side of the canal are clear of vegetation due to maintenance practices. The west side of this canal is not part of this project as it is part of the NLIP Phase 4b Project.

Arcade Creek

The levees along Arcade Creek are maintained vegetation free; however, the channel does have some trees and understory. Between Norwood Avenue and Rio Linda Boulevard the channel contains a thick riparian area but vegetation becomes sparse once it passes Rio Linda Boulevard. Due to the urban conditions in this area, wildlife is limited to those similar to the Parkway but in smaller numbers.

Dry and Robla Creeks

The Dry and Robla Creeks area is a wide open space floodplain, with both creeks being contained between the two levees. The creeks maintain sufficient water throughout the year for trees to survive along the channel. There are scattered wetlands located in the floodplain with a higher concentration at the confluence with the NEMDC. The actual levee slopes in this floodplain contain very little vegetation due to maintenance practices. Wildlife in the floodplain is similar to that in the Parkway.

Magpie Creek Diversion Channel

The project area of Magpie Creek Diversion Channel begins in an industrial area where the channel contains primary grasses. Upstream, the area becomes open space before it intersects with Raley Boulevard and additional industrial development. Seasonal wetlands in the area include natural vernal pools and other areas with standing water that provide a similar biological function as natural vernal pools. Wildlife in this area includes jack rabbits, skunks, beavers, and coyotes that wonder in from the surrounding undeveloped area. Avian species that utilize this habitat include herons and ducks. Amphibian and reptile species include treefrog and common garter snake.

Sacramento River

Vegetation along the Sacramento River is mostly SRA cover consisting of oaks and cottonwoods with berry and shrub understory. There are intermittent locations along the waterline with no trees due to revetment. The Sacramento River Bank Protection Project has repaired some erosion sites along the river using rock revetment on the slope and created small benches. These sites have been planted with riparian vegetation and woody material has been placed in the rock to provide in water habitat for fish species.

Due to the urban development adjacent to the levees in this area, wildlife is limited to small mammals and various avian species. Domestic animals from residents are also often seen along the levees in this basin of the project.

The Sacramento River contains a variety of habitat characteristics that are important to many fish species. Streamside vegetation provides SRA cover and aids in temperature control, streambank stability, and habitat complexity. Cover is used by all life stages of anadromous fish for shelter and provides habitat for salmonids, Sacramento splittail, delta smelt, black bass and sunfish.

Root structures of riparian vegetation can provide bank stability and shelter for juvenile fish. Woody debris can provide shelter from predation and refugia from stream flow. Riparian vegetation also influences the food chain of a stream, providing organic detritus and terrestrial insects. Terrestrial organisms falling from overhanging branches contribute to the food base of the aquatic community. Salmonids in particular are primarily insectivores and feed mainly on drifting food organisms.

In general, the Sacramento River channel provides a migratory pathway to many anadromous fish and provides seasonal rearing habitat to many other native fish species. Native anadromous fish species include Chinook salmon, green and white sturgeon, Pacific and river lamprey, and steelhead. Native resident fish species include delta smelt, hardhead, hitch, prickly sculpin, Sacramento blackfish, Sacramento pikeminnow, Sacramento splittail, Sacramento sucker, threespine stickleback and tule perch. Non-native anadromous species, such as American shad and striped bass, provide recreational sport fishing opportunities. Non-native resident fish species include several species of catfish, black bass, sunfish and minnows. Some non-native species may provide recreational fishing opportunities, such as largemouth bass and smallmouth bass, yet these species also prey upon native juvenile species that use nearshore habitats.

Sacramento Bypass and Weir

The Sacramento Bypass is a 360 acre area that is an important cover and feeding area for wildlife during the late fall, winter and early spring. Vegetation varies from scattered trees, such as mature cottonwoods, willows and valley oaks, to a sparsely covered sand soil area on the eastern end. There are also wetlands within the bypass. Game birds, raptors, songbirds, and native mammals are all present in this area.

The footprint of the expanded weir contains 8 acres of scattered trees along the road, railroad tracks, and levee slope. Primary wildlife in this area is avian species, beavers, skunks, and rabbits. The trees along the river provide shade for many native and non-native species. These trees are also used by various avian species for nesting.

Threatened and Endangered Species

Potentially affected federally-listed species within the project area include the valley elderberry longhorn beetle, giant garter snake, delta smelt, Central Valley steelhead, Sacramento River winter-run Chinook salmon, Central Valley spring-run Chinook salmon, and green sturgeon. The valley elderberry longhorn beetle, giant garter snake, and delta smelt fall under the jurisdiction of the Service. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is responsible for the listed salmonids and green sturgeon.

The riverbank and associated nearshore aquatic area that would be affected by the proposed action constitute portions of the designated critical habitat of the delta smelt. Indirect effects of the proposed action may also extend to other portions of this critical habitat.

In addition, the bank protection action area constitutes elements of essential fish habitat (EFH). EFH is the aquatic habitat (water and substrate) necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding

and or growth to maturity that will allow a level of production needed to support a long-term, sustainable commercial fishery and contribute to a health ecosystem. Consultation with NMFS regarding EFH is required for all commercially-harvested runs of salmon, including all runs of salmon in the project's action area.

Future Conditions Without the Project (No Action Alternative)

American River

Under the No Action Alternative, the Corps would not participate in construction of the proposed project. There would be no construction related effects to the vegetation and wildlife. However, looking over the past several decades as larger flows come down the American River system, the berms in the Parkway have eroded away. Over time the berms within the Parkway would erode and the vegetation would be lost. This loss would also cause any wildlife in the area to relocate to other areas where the habitat they need is present. Because we cannot predict when and how large events would occur, it is not possible to determine when the berms would erode. The loss of the Parkway vegetation and wildlife habitat would be considered a significant impact.

East Side Tributaries

Under the No Action Alternative, the Corps would not participate in construction of the proposed project. There would be no construction related effects to the vegetation and wildlife. The riparian habitat on Arcade Creek between Norwood Avenue and Rio Linda Boulevard would remain. The other creeks do not contain much vegetation; however, the little vegetation that does exist would not be removed. Wildlife in these creek areas would not be disturbed due to construction activities.

Sacramento River

Under the No Action Alternative, the Corps would not participate in construction of the proposed project. There would be no construction related effects to the vegetation and wildlife. The banks along the Sacramento River are very erosive and without some kind of erosion control measures, the banks would continue to erode during high flows. As the banks of the river erode, vegetation would be lost and the levees could fail. It is likely that in order to save the levee structures, flood fighting activities would occur during a high flow emergency response. Flood fighting is usually performed by placing large rock along the levee slope to stop erosion and prevent levee failure and loss of lives. The placement of the rock could prevent and/or impede future growth of trees and vegetation on the levee slopes.

This area of the project is not heavily populated by wildlife; therefore, minimal to moderate impact to wildlife is expected. In the event that flood fighting activities are not successful and a levee failure occurs, all vegetation could be lost and wildlife could be swept away in the flood waters. The loss of vegetation that could occur in a large flood event and the placement of rock along the banks could have significant impacts to vegetation and wildlife, particularly nesting migratory birds.

Future Conditions With the Project

Impacts to vegetation and wildlife within the project area are evaluated based on data collected from tree surveys conducted in 2011, site visits, Google Earth, and the American River Parkway Plan (Parkway Plan). The goals and objectives of the Parkway Plan and how construction of the project would impact those goals and objectives were considered in the impact analysis. Table 3 summarizes the impacts to vegetation by basin and reach.

Table 3. Potential Impacts by Flood Basin and Reach

Waterway	Impacts
American River	65 acres of riparian habitat
	135 acres of unvegetated areas
East Side Tributaries	200 trees would be removed
	4 acres of grasslands
Sacramento River	750 trees removed from degraded levee
	930 trees kept in place on the waterside of the levee
	670 trees removed from the landside of the levee
Sacramento Bypass	Unknown acres of agricultural fields taken out of production and drainage canals removed
	8 acres of riparian vegetation

Alternative 1: Fix Levees in Place

American River

The construction of rock trenches along the American River would result in the removal of about 65 acres of riparian habitat within the Parkway. This acreage was determined by overlaying the largest possible footprint onto an aerial photograph and calculating the riparian habitat within the footprint. Much of this riparian habitat contains trees that have been in the Parkway for 50 to 100 years or more. The Parkway is the largest remaining riparian corridor in the city of Sacramento. In addition, construction would also impact 135 acres of unvegetated areas, which include the levees, patrol roads, and open lands with no trees. Project construction along the American River would be intermittent and would occur over a 7 year period. Trees would not be removed all at one time, they would be removed at each trench site as the trench is constructed.

Most of the 65 acres of riparian habitat is located on land designated by the Parkway Plan as Protected Areas or Nature Study Area. However, the Parkway Plan also allows for flood control activities to be conducted in order to pass 160,000 cfs through the system. Section 4.10 of the Parkway Plan states:

Flood control project, including levee protection projects and vegetation removal for flood control purposes, shall be designed to avoid or minimize adverse impacts on the Parkway, including impacts to wildlife and wildlife corridors. To the extent that adverse impacts are unavoidable, appropriate feasible compensatory mitigation shall be part of the project. Such mitigation should be close to the site of the adverse impact, unless such mitigation creates other undesirable impacts.

Any trees planted would take many years to mature to the level where they provide the same value as those removed. Because there would be many years between when the trees are planted and when they mature to a value of those removed, this impact is considered significant. Construction would likely occur from May through October when birds are nesting. Once the project is authorized and funded, surveys of the project areas would occur to determine if migratory birds are nesting in areas which may be impacted during construction.

East Side Tributaries

There are more than 200 trees on both the landside and waterside of the levees that would need to be removed to construct the project. These trees are suitable nesting habitat for many avian species in the area. Surveys would be conducted to determine if any nesting birds are present prior to construction. If nesting birds are located adjacent to the project area, coordination with the resource agencies would occur. Any trees where nesting birds are located would not be removed while they are actively nesting. However, once the young have fledged, the trees may be removed to construct the project. The loss of trees in this area would be considered significant because new plantings would take many years to grow to the value of those removed.

This alternative would result in temporary impacts to about 4 acres of grasses along the creek channels and levee slopes. Once construction is complete, the areas would be planted with a native grass seed mix to prevent erosion and replace the grasses removed for construction. The grasslands are likely to grow back in a single season.

Sacramento River

Under this alternative the existing levee structure would be degraded by one half to create a working platform for slurry wall installation. As the levee is degraded, all vegetation on the top one half would be removed. The degraded area is about 110 acres and contains about 750 trees of various sizes and species. These trees are located on the top half of the levee, so they provide a small amount of SRA cover and habitat for many avian species. On the waterside top half of the levee there is little understory vegetation due to maintenance activities.

On the waterside of the levee, 930 large trees would be left in place on the lower one-third and rock would be placed around the base of the trees. The trees that would remain in place are scattered over 31,130 linear feet (50 acres). The rock protection around the trees would reduce the potential for erosion and anchor the trees in place to lower the risk of uprooting in high water events. The understory vegetation would be removed to provide a clean surface to place the rock. Excluding the large trees, vegetation in this area is primarily small shrubs, low growing plants of various species, and grasses. Once the rock protection is in place and a planting berm is

constructed, the area would be planted with small shrubs. Appropriate plants would be selected to maximize wildlife habitat.

On the landside of the levee all trees would be removed on the levee slope and within 15 feet of the levee toe to comply with the Corps vegetation policy. Within this 15 feet compliance area, a 10-foot landside operations, maintenance, and emergency access corridor would be established. There are 670 trees of various species and size within this landside area that would be removed and not be replaced on-site. The removal of these trees is considered significant because it would take many years for the replacement trees to establish to the value of those removed.

The landside slopes are primarily covered with ornamental groundcovers installed by adjacent private property owners. In some places landscaping has been extended beyond the fence or property lines and up the levee slopes. Degrading of the levee would include removal of all vegetation on the upper half of the landside slope. All disturbed areas, including the levee slopes, would be planted with native grasses to prevent erosion. The 15 foot landside vegetation free zone would be maintained vegetation free, except for the native grasses.

Because this area is very urbanized, the primary effects to wildlife would be to avian species. Surveys would be conducted to determine if any nesting birds are present prior to construction. If nesting birds are located adjacent to the project area, coordination with the resource agencies would occur. Trees where nesting birds are located would not be removed while they are actively nesting. However, once the young have fledged the trees may be removed to construct the project.

Alternative 2 – Fix Levees and Widen the Sacramento Weir and Bypass

The footprints of all features in this alternative are the same as Alternative 1 with the added feature of widening the Sacramento Weir and Bypass. Areas that no longer require a raise would still maintain the same footprint since the purpose of the raise would instead be accomplished via the installation of a retaining wall at the toe of the levee. Therefore, the effects to vegetation and wildlife are the same as those for Alternative 1, with the addition of those associated with the Sacramento Weir and Bypass.

Sacramento Weir and Bypass

Habitat within the existing Bypass would remain the same as the existing conditions. The Bypass would be expanded by about 300 acres, which would become open space and would likely become similar habitat for wildlife as the existing Bypass. Operations of the new weir and bypass would be determined after construction is complete. No grading or altering of the lands within the existing bypass would occur as part of this alternative. Since the southern side of the bypass is lowest in elevation, water would naturally flow to the existing area and continue to support existing vegetation and wildlife. Due to the natural flow of water in the Bypass, existing wetlands are not expected to be impacted by construction of the project. There is a potential for additional wetlands to actually develop in the added 300 acres of bypass since the land would no longer be farmed. While the loss of rice fields has a negative effect on giant garter snake, which is currently being addressed in the Endangered Species Act consultation for this project, the

conversion of this land back to its natural state would have benefits to other wildlife and could become an expansion of the Sacramento Bypass Wildlife Area.

There are 8 acres of riparian vegetation that would be removed to construct the weir structure. The 8 acre area contains both the Old River Road and Union Pacific Railroad train tracks. Avian species are the primary wildlife in this area with some small animals like fox and coyotes, which pass through the area to access the river. Included within the 8 acres are 1,500 linear feet of vegetation along the Sacramento River which may be removed to allow the river to flow freely into the weir. Both native and non-native fish species use this area of the river. During construction there would be direct effects to wildlife as the human activities associated with the construction would likely cause any wildlife to relocate to other open space lands to avoid the disturbance; however, the expansion of the Sacramento Weir and Bypass would have a positive effect on vegetation and wildlife once construction is complete and lands are converted from farming activities to open space.

DISCUSSION

Service Mitigation Policy

The recommendations provided herein for the protection of fish and wildlife resources are in accordance with the Service's Mitigation Policy as published in the Federal Register 46:15; January 23, 1981).

The Mitigation Policy provides Service personnel with guidance in making recommendations to protect or conserve fish and wildlife resources. The policy helps ensure consistent and effective Service recommendations, while allowing agencies and developers to anticipate Service recommendations and plan early for mitigation needs. The intent of the policy is to ensure protection and conservation of the most important and valuable fish and wildlife resources, while allowing reasonable and balanced use of the Nation's natural resources.

Under the Mitigation Policy, resources are assigned to one of four distinct Resource Categories, each having a mitigation planning goal which is consistent with the fish and wildlife values involved. The Resource Categories cover a range of habitat values from those considered to be unique and irreplaceable to those believed to be much more common and of relatively lesser value to fish and wildlife. However, the Mitigation Policy does not apply to threatened and endangered species, Service recommendations for completed Federal projects or projects permitted or licensed prior to enactment of Service authorities, or Service recommendations related to the enhancement of fish and wildlife resources.

In applying the Mitigation Policy during an impact assessment, the Service first identifies each specific habitat or cover-type that may be impacted by the project. Evaluation species which utilize each habitat or cover-type are then selected for Resource Category analysis. Selection of evaluation species can be based on several criteria, as follows: (1) species known to be sensitive to specific land- and water-use actions; (2) species that play a key role in nutrient cycling or energy flow; (3) species that utilize a common environmental resource; or (4) species that are associated with Important Resource Problems, such as anadromous fish and migratory birds, as designated by the Director or Regional Directors of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Based on the

relative importance of each specific habitat to its selected evaluation species, and the habitat's relative abundance, the appropriate Resource Category and associated mitigation planning goal are determined.

Mitigation planning goals range from “no loss of existing habitat value” (i.e., Resource Category 1) to “minimize loss of habitat value” (i.e., Resource Category 4). The planning goal of Resource Category 2 is “no net loss of in-kind habitat value.” To achieve this goal, any unavoidable losses would need to be replaced in-kind. “In-kind replacement” means providing or managing substitute resources to replace the habitat value of the resources lost, where such substitute resources are physically and biologically the same or closely approximate those lost. The planning goal of Resource Category 3 is “no net loss of habitat while minimizing loss of in-kind value.” To achieve this goal any unavoidable losses will be replaced in-kind or if it is not desirable or possible out-of-kind mitigation would be allowed. The planning goal of Resource Category 4 is “minimize loss of habitat value.” To achieve this goal the Service will recommend ways to rectify, reduce, or minimize loss of habitat value.

In addition to mitigation planning goals based on habitat values, Region 8 of the Service, which includes California, has a mitigation planning goal of no net loss of acreage and value for wetland habitat. This goal is applied in all impact analyses.

In recommending mitigation for adverse impacts to fish and wildlife habitat, the Service uses the same sequential mitigation steps recommended in the Council on Environmental Quality’s regulations. These mitigation steps (in order of preference) are: avoidance, minimization, rectifying, reducing or eliminating impacts over time, and compensation.

Ten fish and/or wildlife habitats were identified in the project area which had potential for impacts from the project: oak woodland, riparian forest, riparian scrub-shrub, SRA cover, shallow open water, emergent wetland, annual grassland, agriculture (non-rice cultivation), ornamental landscape, and other. The resource categories, evaluation species, and mitigation planning goal for the habitats impacted by the project are summarized in Table 4.

The evaluation species selected for the oak woodland that would be impacted are acorn woodpecker, turkey, and mule deer. Acorn woodpeckers utilize oak woodlands for nearly all their life requisites; 50-60 percent of the acorn woodpecker’s annual diet consists of acorns. Acorn woodpeckers can also represent impacts to other canopy-dwelling species. Turkeys forage and breed in oak woodlands and are abundant in the project area. Mule deer also heavily depend on acorns as a dietary item in the fall and spring; the abundance of acorns and other browse influence the seasonal pattern of habitat use by deer. These latter species represent species which utilize the ground component of the habitat and both have important non-consumptive human uses (i.e., wildlife viewing and bird watching). Based on the high value of oak woodlands to the evaluation species, and their declining abundance, the Service has determined oak woodlands which would be affected by the project should be placed in Resource Category 2, with an associated mitigation planning goal of “no net loss of in-kind habitat value or acreage.”

Table 4. Resource categories, evaluation species, and mitigation planning goal for the habitats possibly impacted by the proposed American River Common Features General Re-evaluation Report, Sacramento County, California.

COVER-TYPE	EVALUATION SPECIES	RESOURCE CATEGORY	MITIGATION GOAL
Oak Woodland	Acorn woodpecker Turkey Deer	2	No net loss of in-kind habitat value or acreage.
Riparian Forest	Swainson's hawk Wood duck Bullock's oriole	2	No net loss of in-kind habitat value or acreage.
Riparian Scrub-Shrub	Yellow warbler	2	No net loss of in-kind habitat value or acreage.
SRA Cover	Juvenile salmonids Herons and Egrets	1	No loss of existing habitat value.
Emergent Wetland	Marsh Wren	2	No net loss of in-kind habitat value or acreage.
Shallow Open Water	Egret Sunfish	2	No net loss of in-kind habitat value or acreage.
Annual Grassland	Red-tailed hawk	3	No net loss of habitat value while minimizing loss of in-kind habitat value.
Agriculture (non-rice cultivation)	White-tailed kite California vole	4	Minimize loss of habitat value.
Ornamental Landscape	None	4	Minimize loss of habitat value.
Other	None	4	Minimize loss of habitat value.

The evaluation species selected for the riparian forest that would be impacted by the project are Swainson's hawks, wood ducks, and Bullock's orioles. Riparian forest vegetation provides important cover, and roosting, foraging, and nesting habitat for these species. Large diameter trees also provide nesting sites for species such as wood ducks and Swainson's hawks. Riparian woodland cover-types are of generally high value to the evaluation species, and are overall, extremely scarce (less than 2% remaining from pre-development conditions). Therefore, the Service finds that any riparian forest cover-type that would be impacted by the project should be placed in Resource Category 2, with an associated mitigation planning goal of "no net loss of in-kind habitat value or acreage." In addition, the Service's regional goal of no net loss of wetland acreage or habitat values, whichever is greater, would apply to this habitat type.

The evaluation species selected for the riparian scrub-shrub vegetation that would be impacted by the project is the yellow warbler. Riparian scrub-shrub vegetation provides important cover, and roosting, foraging, and nesting habitat for this species. Riparian cover-types are generally of high value to the evaluation species, and are overall extremely scarce (less than 2% remaining from pre-development conditions). Therefore, the Service finds that any riparian scrub-shrub cover-type that would be impacted by the project should be placed in Resource Category 2, with an associated mitigation planning goal of “no net loss of in-kind habitat value or acreage.” In addition, the Service’s regional goal of no net loss of wetland acreage or habitat values, whichever is greater, would apply to this habitat type.

The evaluation species selected for SRA cover that would be affected by the project are juvenile salmonids (salmon and steelhead) and the heron and egret family (family Ardeidae). Salmonids were selected because large declines in their numbers are among the most important resource issues in the region, and because of their very high commercial and sport fishing values. Herons and egrets were selected because of the Service’s responsibilities for their management under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, their relatively high value for non-consumptive human uses, such as bird watching, and their value as indicator species for the many birds which use SRA cover.

In 1992, the Service designated SRA cover that is impacted by bank protection activities within the Sacramento Bank Protection Project action area as Resource Category 1 (USFWS 1992). Under Resource Category 1, habitat to be impacted is high value, unique, and irreplaceable on a national basis or in the eco-region, and the Service’s mitigation planning goal is for no loss of existing habitat value.

The evaluation species selected for the emergent wetland cover-type is the marsh wren. Drainage wetland habitat provides important cover, foraging, nesting, and roosting habitat for such water associated birds as well as some amphibians and aquatic mammals. Insects and spiders are taken from vegetation, the wetland floor, and while in flight (Gutzwiller and Anderson 1987). For protection from predators, the marsh wren usually constructs nests in reedy vegetation about 15 inches above water that is 2 to 3 feet deep (Gutzwiller and Anderson 1987). Because of the medium to high value of this habitat to the evaluation species, and its relative scarcity, the Service designates any emergent wetland habitat within the project area as Resource Category 2, with its associated mitigation planning goal of “no net loss of in-kind habitat value or acreage.”

The evaluation species selected for the shallow open water cover-type is the egret and sunfish. Shallow, open water is important to a number of regionally important fish and wildlife. For example, wading birds (e.g., herons and egrets) use it for feeding, as do a number of gamefish, including sunfish, catfish and striped bass. It is also part of the critical habitat designated for federally listed delta smelt and Sacramento River winter-run Chinook salmon. Such shallow water is generally removed when typical bank protection is done, especially when the waterside of the levee is reshaped. The result is likely to be higher velocities and deeper water along the new shoreline. Compounding the problem is the large amount of riprap that has already been placed in the vicinity of the proposed action, thus effectively removing many miles of shallow, open water. In concert with past Sacramento River Bank Protection Project planning, the

Service is designating such habitat that would be impacted as Resource Category 2, with an associated planning goal of “no net loss of in-kind habitat value or acreage.”

The evaluation species selected for the annual grassland cover-type is the red-tailed hawk, which utilizes these areas for foraging. This species was selected because of the Service’s responsibility for their protection and management under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and their overall high non-consumptive values to humans. Annual grassland areas potentially impacted by the project vary in their relative values to the evaluation species, depending on the degree of human disturbance, plant species composition, and juxtaposition to other foraging and nesting areas. Therefore, the Service designates the annual grassland cover-type in the project area as Resource Category 3. Our associated mitigation planning goal for these areas is “no net loss of habitat value while minimizing loss of in-kind habitat value.”

The evaluation species selected for the agriculture, non-rice cultivation, cover-type is the white-tailed kite (formerly black-shouldered kite) and the California vole. The white-tailed kite in California is a common species of open and cultivated bottomland and is an obligate predator on diurnal small mammals (Faanes and Howard 1987). Movements and nesting of the white-tailed kite is largely governed by concentrations of mice and voles (Faanes and Howard 1987). The California vole is a widespread and common herbivore in California (Brylski 1990), and its abundance and distribution, along with daytime activity, make it an important prey species. Because this habitat is not native, and is managed for crop production unless fallowed, the Service designates the agriculture cover-type in the project area as Resource Category 4. Our associated mitigation planning goal for these areas is “minimize loss of habitat value.”

No evaluation species were identified for the ornamental landscape or “other” cover-types. The ornamental landscape is typically vegetation which occurs along the fence line of adjacent private properties and is maintained by individual landowners. The “other” cover-type encompasses those areas which do not fall within the other cover-types such as gravel and paved roads, parking areas, buildings, bare ground, riprap, etc. Generally these cover-types would not provide any significant habitat value for wildlife species. Therefore, the Service designates the ornamental landscape and “other” cover-types in the project area as Resource Category 4. Our associated mitigation planning goal for these areas is “minimize loss of habitat value.”

The recommendations below are based on preliminary construction designs provided by the Corps for the Common Features GRR. Once the specific project designs are developed, the Service’s recommendations will be refined.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Service recommends:

1. Avoid impacts to native trees, shrubs, and aquatic vegetation. Any native trees or shrubs removed with a diameter at breast height of 2 inches or greater should be replaced on-site, in-kind with container plantings so that the combined diameter of the container plantings is equal to the combined diameter of the trees removed. These replacement

plantings should be monitored for 5 years or until they are determined to be established and self-sustaining. The planting site(s) should be protected in perpetuity.

2. Avoid the loss of SRA cover by planting native woody vegetation within the bank protection areas. Work with the Service, NMFS, and CDFW to develop planting and monitoring plans, and with DWR and SAFCA to develop a variance to allow vegetation within the Corps' vegetation free zone to remain in place, especially in areas designed for rock slope protection.
3. Avoid impacts to migratory birds nesting in trees along the access routes and adjacent to the proposed repair sites by conducting pre-construction surveys for active nests along proposed haul roads, staging areas, and construction sites. This would especially apply if construction begins in spring or early summer. Work activity around active nests should be avoided until the young have fledged. The following protocol from the CDFW for Swainson's hawk would suffice for the pre-construction survey for raptors.

A focused survey for Swainson's hawk nests will be conducted by a qualified biologist during the nesting season (February 1 to August 31) to identify active nests within 0.25 mile of the project area. The survey will be conducted no less than 14 days and no more than 30 days prior to the beginning of construction. If nesting Swainson's hawks are found within 0.25 mile of the project area, no construction will occur during the active nesting season of February 1 to August 31, or until the young have fledged (as determined by a qualified biologist), unless otherwise negotiated with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. If work is begun and completed between September 1 and February 28, a survey is not required.

4. Avoid future impacts to the site by ensuring all fill material is free of contaminants.
5. Minimize project impacts by reseeding all disturbed areas, including staging areas, at the completion of construction with native forbs and grasses. Reseeding should be conducted just prior to the rainy season to enhance germination and plant establishment.
6. Minimize the impact of removal and trimming of all trees and shrubs by having these activities supervised and/or completed by a certified arborist.
7. Compensate the loss of oak woodland, riparian forest, riparian scrub-scrub, and emergent wetland at a ratio of at least 2:1. If onsite compensation at a ratio of 2:1 is not possible, the Corps should work with the Service and other resource agencies on the development of a suitable offsite compensation area. For the loss of other cover-types, the Corps should work with the Service and other resource agencies on the development of compensation success benchmarks to ensure that goals are achieved.
8. All impacted areas should be planted with a diverse mix of woody and herbaceous riparian vegetation. Sites should be diverse (a mix of riparian forest and scrub-shrub) and fit into the surrounding landscape. The planting plan should take into account what is missing from the surrounding vegetation and attempt to create heterogeneous habitats.

The Corps should develop a baseline map of existing vegetation communities. Given the amount of rock already placed and the amount proposed for placement, this can serve to create diverse and heterogeneous habitats.

9. Include within the planting contract a provision for the contractor to plant understory species after some of the woody canopy has established. Studies have shown that planting late successional understory species after woody species canopy cover has been established provides better success for establishing these understory plants. Incorporating these species within the planting mix provides more diverse habitat for wildlife species (Johnston 2009).
10. Consult with the Service on project effects on the giant garter snake, the delta smelt and its critical habitat, and the valley elderberry longhorn beetle and its critical habitat.
11. Contact the NOAA Fisheries for possible effects of the project on federally-listed species under their jurisdiction.
12. Contact the California Department of Fish and Wildlife regarding possible effects of the project on State listed species.

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