Meeting Notes  
Natural Resources Institute of the University of the Pacific  
Development in the Flood Plain Dialog Group  
January 31, 2007

Dean Ravi Jain welcomed and thanked the attendees.

Regent Tom Zuckerman welcomed and thanked the attendees led self-introductions around the table.

Margit Aramburu, Director, Natural Resources Institute, welcomed the group and asked that comments regarding the draft notes of the December 2006 meeting be forwarded to her for inclusion.

**Presentation on and Discussion of DWR’s Proposed Budget for Levee Bond Funds:**

Dr. Les Harder, Deputy Director for Public Safety and Business Operations for the Department of Water Resources (DWR), made a presentation on DWR’s proposed budget for expenditure of the levee bond funds. He noted that the State does not have a full understanding of the needs for levee work and that the State is currently evaluating the levees. He said the State is undertaking 20,000 to 30,000 borings and soundings of the levees, and will survey the levees, evaluate freeboard, seepage, and under seepage. He said the State has a suspicion that the levee system is not a reliable system, noting that last year 33 sites needed emergency repairs. He said the goal is a more sustainable system, and said the urban areas will be the priority for reaching a high level of protection.

Dr. Harder said the first track, taking 2 to 4 years, would be funding of regional plans that would in the aggregate become the California Flood Plan; completion of the Delta Vision process; and completion of levee evaluations. The second track, during the same period, would include “no regret”, ready to go flood control projects that need funding. He noted the State currently has requests totaling $204 million dollars for projects in Yuba, Sutter, and SAFCA/Natomas areas.

The State will spend Prop 84 funds first; they have a 5-year life. He said the Delta funds of 3/4 to 1 billion dollars, will be held in reserve until the Delta Vision process is completed. About $50 million will be spent half and half on subventions and special projects.

Prop 1E funds require maximum local cost share, but that could be zero local dollars. He noted that one early project might be a $40 million dollar Natomas cross channel project between RD 1000 and RD 1001.

Mr. Troppmann asked if projects will be funded at certain levels including a cap on costs, or if the State would fund cost over-runs; he noted that funding cost over-runs could result in the early projects using up most of the bond funds.
Dr. Harder said funds would also be used for the State share of a Folsom Dam project ($300 million) and preparation of a California Flood Plan ($6 million). He noted that the urban levees will be evaluated and then upgraded to ensure that areas are not just identified as being vulnerable to flood damages, but corrected to ensure public safety.

Dr. Harder responded to a number of questions: a new Folsom Dam spillway is required for Natomas to meet 200 year protection; the State will be able to complete evaluation of the levees; the State will determine in areas meet the urban definition at the time the grant request is submitted; there is a cap of $200 million per project; emergency response will be addressed as part of the overall flood plan.

Mr. Troppmann asked about evaluating projects that will provide the most protection for the largest number of people versus projects that are ready to go/first in line; Dr. Harder responded that the State will have to project deep basins with large populations and the State will have a good idea of needed levee work when the evaluation process is completed in two years. He agreed that projects that provide the most benefit for the cost will be highest priority and that some proposed projects would get no funding. Mr. Troppmann expressed concern that some good projects will not get funding; Dr. Harder said the proposition bond funds are not enough to meet all projected needs.

Ms Coglianese said she was not yet convinced of the value of the levee-boring program.

Mr. Hartmann suggested spending all the funds in the next five years on projects, not on analysis and planning. He suggested letting the locals make the analysis of what is needed and expending the funds as quickly as possible.

Dr. Harder commented there are not enough bond funds for levee upgrades to non-project levees outside the Delta.

Presentation on and Discussion of San Joaquin County’s Proposed Budget for Levee Bond Funds:

Dante John Nomellini described a spending scenario developed by reclamation districts, local governments, and flood control districts in San Joaquin County. The proposal included the following points:

- Commit the bond funds within 5 years
- Support one or two additional bonds for levee work
- Support study and evaluation of the levee system
- Define the level of needed flood protection and whether the State’s Plan includes major features such as corridors, floodways and dams
- Define 200 year level of protection
- Seek federal support for dam projects
- Delineate the bond funds 2/3 for urban levees and 1/3 for non-urban levees
- Allot funds to local districts for project development, CEQA review, and construction
- Require DWR review of local projects (“does it make sense”)
• Adopt Corps Standards for maintenance standard for Delta levees
• Accept project levee criteria
• Designate funding at $3.8 million per mile for urban levees and $343,000 per mile for non-urban levees
• Project 100% funding to raise to current state standards and design levels
• Provide increased state liability for non-project levees
• Allocation funds for emergency response: $50 million for Delta; $50 million north of Delta; and $50 million south of the Delta.

Mr. Nomellini noted that some Delta agricultural reclamation districts do not have funds to pay for work and need 100% state funding.

In response to a question, Mr. Nomellini said that a working group in San Joaquin County had identified areas for improved flood protection, including channels to be cleared, lands to be used for temporary flood water storage, enlargement of Paradise Cut, etc.

Mr. Hardesty commented that the funds should be spread out geographically to allow all areas to improve levels of flood control and suggested that the funds be used to provide system wide improvements because the overall system is intended to protect everyone.

Mr. Hartmann said he is aware of a non-urban district located between two urbanized districts that need financial assistance; he suggested that the urbanized districts could help fund improvements for the non-urban district that would enhance flood protection for urbanized areas.

Mr. Zuckerman voiced concern that there is no assurance that bond funds would go to areas most in need of funding; he said he supported the bonds because the funds are needed.

Mr. Pineda said FEMA’s 5-year map modernization project has identified over 40 reaches that do not meet program requirements. He noted that public meetings are currently scheduled in San Joaquin County to discuss the new FEMA rate maps.

Mr. Hardesty said that new criteria would result in more deficient sites.

Dr. Harder said he understands the concerns are equity of fund dispersement and noted that the bond bill language was drafted by the Legislators; he said he shares an interest in expending the funds quickly, and wisely. He does not want the levee bond fund expenditures to be deemed “squandered”. He said expenditures need to be more strategic than in the past. Dr. Harder said the urban areas are high priority; Delta levees are high priority; and emergency reserves and preparedness is high priority. He noted that the South Delta Plan is not ready for implementation. He said he is concerned that designating expenditure of funds by levee mile might be deemed an entitlement and suggested that system wide improvements, such as bypasses, need to be delineated and implemented. He noted that the bond bill language seeks maximum possible cost
sharing. He noted that regional plans are critical for developing the longer-term solutions to flood impacts. He noted that SAFCA has developed a regional plan to increase levee stability in urban areas and to add to urban protection through purchase of flowage easements upstream. Dr. Harder noted that the bond funds will not be available for maintenance and regional plans can help develop strategies to have urban areas assist in funding maintenance of levees in non-urban areas.

Mr. Nomellini said that if a lot of funding is diverted to studies, there will be less bond funds available for actual work on the levees.

Mr. Neudeck asked if funds would be allotted for bringing non-urban project levees to design levels; Dr. Harder said urban areas would be highest priority.

**Next Steps:**

Mr. Zuckerman suggested there was several areas of agreement and suggested a small group meet to draft points of consensus; there was general support. The group included: Dr. Les Harder (DWR), Dan Nomellini (Delta RDs), Don Troppmann (business perspective), Susan Tatayon (TNC), Roger Churchwell (San Joaquin County), Dick Marshall (CCVFCA), and a representative of SAFCA.

Next full meeting will be Friday, March 9, 2007—location to be determined.