ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROGRAM STAGE 2 CONSERVATION STRATEGY, HABITAT RESTORATION TARGETS

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At the July 19, 2007 Blue Ribbon Task Force meeting the ERP Implementing Agencies presented information on the developing ERP conservation strategy for the Delta. The map and supporting Stage 2 Conservation Strategy for the Delta-Suisun Marsh Planning Area narrative (ERP July 18, 2008) identified the types of habitat to be restored and identified where that could happen within the four ERP Management Zones (MZ) in the Delta and in Suisun Marsh. At the Meeting the Task Force requested that acreage targets for the recommended habitat types be provided. In response to that request the ERP has identified habitat restoration targets by MZ. These targets are based on GIS analysis of the total areas potentially available for habitat restoration based on elevation, but do not fully account for constraints such as infrastructure or flood control. It must also be recognized that most of the land within the Delta is privately owned and must be acquired before habitat restoration could take place. For the most part existing public lands are not suitable for restoration to the two focal habitat types of the conservation strategy, intertidal wetland and flood plain.

Table 1. Target Restoration Acreages by ERP Management Zone for the Delta

Management Zone	Potentially Suitable for Intertidal Restoration	Intertidal Restoration Target	Potentially Suitable for Flood Plain	Flood Plain Target	Transitional* Habitat Protection Target
North Delta					10 - 15,000
Cache Slough	39,500	10-20,000			
Other Areas	46,900	10-15,000			
Yolo Bypass (in Delta)			31,500	7-15,000	
Yolo Bypass (outside Delta)			17,000	4-7,000	
East Delta	16,800	3-7,000			5 - 10,000
Consumnes/ Mokelumne			37,300	8-15,000	

Outside Delta			8,900	2- 5,000	
South Delta	52,000	10-25,000	27,000	7-10,000	5 -10,000
Western Delta		3,000-5,000		2-3,000	1 - 2,000
Suisun Marsh	54,000	5,000-9,000	NA	NA	3 - 5,000

* In Delta, additional transitional habitat protection needed outside legal Delta.
** Amount of intertidal restoration called for in Suisun Marsh Plan, Tidal Marsh Recovery Plan identifies a target of 20,000.

The ERP Stage 2 Conservation Strategy is a biological view of how the Delta could be configured to restore historic form and function to the maximum extent. The Strategy shifts away from the focus on shallow water habitat in the original ERP documents to focus more on intertidal habitat. Restoration of intertidal habitat will allow the reestablishment of food web support and the types of habitat which were most abundant in the historic Delta. The strategy presents a GIS-based overview of the Delta-Suisun Marsh Planning Area, showing areas with potential for habitat restoration and or protection. Five broad categories are identified for restoration or protection; inter-tidal, channel, floodplain, upland transition, and managed wetland and wildlife friendly agriculture. Elevation and soil type are the drivers for this preliminary depiction that does not include water conveyance options, infrastructure or land use patterns. The method of conveyance, through-Delta or isolated facility strongly affect where restoration priorities should be focused. With through – Delta restoration would be focused in the North and Eastern Delta.

The Ecosystem Restoration Program (ERP) has an established process for identifying, peer reviewing, selecting and funding projects. That process should continue to be used to assure the most effective projects are identified and implemented consistent with the ERP Strategic Plan, Stage 2 Conservation Strategy, the Delta Regional Ecosystem Restoration Implementation Plan (DRERIP) and the Suisun Marsh Restoration and Management Plan.

Scientifically robust performance indicators and performance measures must be determined, and a monitoring program built to collect the necessary data to provide a consistent process for assessing success in achieving restoration goals. Effective future restoration cannot be accomplished without scientifically valid information on how previous restoration efforts and management actions have and are performing to allow for effective adaptive management. The ERP implementing agencies have identified this as a critical component for effective ecosystem restoration.