

Firebaugh Multi-Benefit Flood Project Charter

Draft Charter – September 16, 2015

Purpose

This Project Charter describes the flood management project, the Working Group to drive the project, the stakeholders, roles and responsibilities, communication, and the schedule. This version of the Charter is expected to remain in effect for at least the period from the date of adoption through June, 2017, the duration of the current funding from DWR for the Regional Flood Management Planning. At the end of this period, the Working Group may continue to operate under this Charter, or may revise the Charter as appropriate, subject to the approval or general support of the Working Group members.

Vision

A multi-benefit flood management project along Reach 3 of the San Joaquin River (SJR) that will reduce flood risks for small disadvantaged communities and support public safety, local economic stability, ecosystem vitality, enriching experiences, and recreational use of the river.

Introduction

California Department of Water Resources (DWR) together with the Upper San Joaquin Regional Flood Management Group (Regional Group), City of Firebaugh and other stakeholders intend to implement an achievable flood protection project that offers up to a 100-year level of flood protection (FEMA standard) for the greater City of Firebaugh including Eastside Acres, along with other benefits.

The Central Valley Flood Protection Plan (CVFPP) has proposed a 100-year level of flood protection for select small communities (fewer than 10,000 residents and not urbanizing). The City of Firebaugh and Eastside Acres are small communities located along Reach 3 of the SJR with Firebaugh west of the river and Eastside Acres east of the river.

Firebaugh (with a population of approximately 7,500) and Eastside Acres (with approximately 85 homes) are currently protected from flooding by the Chowchilla Canal Bypass and pay assessment fees to the Lower San Joaquin Levee District. Both communities are mapped in the FEMA 100-year base floodplain. They experience flood threats at flows greater than 4,000 cubic feet per second in the river and have to resort to sand bagging for additional protection. However, a single purpose flood project to increase protection to a 100-year level would be extremely difficult to justify and fund locally. A multi-benefit project is promising and much more likely to attract State and federal funding.

The City of Firebaugh has a Parks and Trails Plan that outlines a vision for how the community can access and enjoy the SJR. Loss of habitat has greatly diminished the river's function as a wildlife habitat. The San Joaquin River Restoration Program (SJRRP) expects that seepage caused by increased Restoration Flows in the river will cause impacts to adjacent landowners. The SJRRP proposes to target lands impacted by seepage and with high conservation value in order to mitigate for seepage management impacts in combination with the multi-benefit flood management project. Integrating all these projects into the multi-benefit flood management project will enhance each project.

The Project

The project will be referred to as the Firebaugh Multi-Benefit Flood Project and will include components for Eastside Acres and the City of Firebaugh. The Eastside Acres component includes the construction of levee embankments and inspection trenches. It also includes structure raises, a levee closure structure and pump station. Ecosystem restoration will be integrated into the project. The Firebaugh project components include a combination of new levees, fixing and raising levees in-place and setback levee improvements, a closure structure for Poso Canal and a recreational trail system. Ecosystem restoration will also be integrated at setback levee locations.

The overall goals of the project are:

1. Provide 100-year flood protection to the greater Firebaugh area to protect people and property while creating temporary and permanent jobs.
2. Integrate multi-benefit project features to protect and restore lands along the San Joaquin River in order to enhance habitat for migratory birds and fish, as well as other riparian-obligate species and improve funding possibilities.
3. Create opportunities for thoughtfully managed recreation, education and public access where appropriate.

The implementation of the project will need to be phased in order to construct near term critical flood improvements for the communities with longer term improvements to meet the 100-year objective to follow. There may need to be a funding source associated with the project to ensure that the new facilities are maintained by an entity to be agreed on.

Working Group

To advance the project concepts to the next level, the project proponents need to form a dedicated Working Group to better define the project, establish a governance structure and position the project for future funding opportunities. It is envisioned that the Working Group will build on the work done so far, develop a cohesive plan, achieve funding and implement the project.

The following are the objectives of the Working Group:

1. Organize project proponents to address project plan and implementation issues.
2. Produce a broadly supported project plan including scope, budget, and schedule.
3. Form a JPA or other governance entity that can qualify and administer grant opportunities.

4. Identify funding sources.
5. Help prepare grant applications.
6. Identify long-term O&M responsibilities and funding.
7. Coordinate with State and federal agencies on future studies/investigations.
8. Engage property owners and other stakeholders.
9. Resolve any outstanding project issues

Stakeholders

The following are the project stakeholders and their interests and goals. All stakeholders are encouraged to update their goals as necessary. It is understood that different stakeholders will participate in different aspects of the project to varying degrees.

City of Firebaugh: Goals include reducing flooding and mandatory flood insurance requirements, increasing jobs, and connecting existing trails into a riverfront trail network.

California Department of Water Resources: Goal is to provide 100 year flood protection for small communities and achieve a broad range of public benefits.

San Joaquin River Restoration Program (SJRRP): The US Bureau of Reclamation is the lead agency for the SJRRP whose Settlement Restoration Goal is to restore and maintain naturally reproducing and self-sustaining populations of salmon and other fish. This project provides an opportunity to obtain rearing habitat for salmon, and also address groundwater seepage concerns of landowners as required in Public Law 111-11.

Lower San Joaquin Levee District (LSJLD): Goal is to manage its floodway in accordance with existing maintenance agreements. The portion of the San Joaquin River where the project will be located is included in the LSJLD boundary and was part of the Lower San Joaquin River Flood Control Project built by the Central Valley Flood Protection Board. Maintenance of the channel (but not the levees) is the responsibility of the District.

Madera County/Community of Eastside Acres: Goals include reducing flooding, increasing jobs and having access to the riverfront for recreation. This project will help reduce the cost of living because residents may not have to pay for flood insurance.

Fresno County: Because Firebaugh is located in Fresno County; the county's goals should be aligned with those of Firebaugh.

Central California Irrigation District: Goals include protection of irrigation canals and other infrastructure.

Columbia Canal Company: Goals include protection of irrigation canals and other infrastructure.

Migratory Bird Conservation Partnership (MBCP): Collaboration between Audubon California, Point Blue Conservation Science, and The Nature Conservancy – is involved in both the SJRRP and Upper San Joaquin River RFMP with the intent of maximizing migratory bird habitat along the San Joaquin River.

San Joaquin River Partnership: Its goal is to support the SJRRP, as well as other environmental and community benefits projects in the San Joaquin Valley.

River Partners: Mission is to create wildlife habitat for the benefit of people and the environment. This non-profit seeks to promote the development of an integrated project for Firebaugh, and assist however possible in the management of riverside lands for public safety, agriculture and wildlife values.

San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust – Its mission is to preserve and restore SJR lands having ecological, scenic or historic significance, to educate the public on the need for stewardship, to research issues affecting the river, and to promote educational, recreational and agricultural uses consistent with the protection of the river’s resources.

US Army Corps of Engineers: This portion of the San Joaquin River is part of the Lower San Joaquin River Flood Control Project of the US Army Corps of Engineers.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife: Its mission is to manage California's diverse fish, wildlife, and plant resources, and the habitats upon which they depend, for their ecological values and for their use and enjoyment by the public.

Working Group Roles and Responsibilities

The following have been identified as the Working Group along with their roles and responsibilities. This list and roles will be refined as necessary as the Draft Charter gets finalized.

City of Firebaugh – Serve as project lead with support from DWR and would also lead the Working Group.

Madera County: Provide support for the planning and implementation of the project.

California Department of Water Resources – Provide planning and technical analysis done as part of San Joaquin Basin-wide Feasibility Study as well as provide information on funding opportunities when state flood or habitat funds are available.

San Joaquin River Restoration Program – Provide facilitation and coordination. Where appropriate, engage in outreach with landowners, and lead land transactions. Assist with grant writing and fundraising.

Lower San Joaquin Levee District – Provide input on flood plans. Review and provide input into grant applications. Assist with grant writing and fundraising to the extent possible.

Audubon California – Engage in identification of funding sources. Assist with grant writing and fundraising. Co-lead on-the-ground restoration efforts.

The Nature Conservancy – Engage in outreach to and cultivation of landowners and funders. Where appropriate, lead land transactions. Assist with grant writing and fundraising. Consult on the ground restoration efforts.

River Partners – Engage in identification of funding sources. Assist with grant writing and fundraising. Provide land management where needed or appropriate. Co-lead on-the-ground restoration efforts.

American Rivers – Engage in identification of funding sources. Assist with grant writing and fundraising.

Communication

The following provide the schedule of communication and possible items to be covered by the work group and other stakeholders:

Quarterly In-Person Meetings: Broader stakeholders will be coordinated through in-person meetings, likely quarterly or twice a year in Firebaugh. These meetings would be scheduled as needed to inform all the stakeholders about upcoming activities or progress made and solicit input on options. The Working Group will coordinate with the governing entity to define the project and with the Upper San Joaquin Regional Flood Management Group and other interest groups in the region.

Monthly Conference Calls/Email Updates: In between the quarterly in-person meetings, monthly conference calls will be held as necessary. Email updates may be used in lieu of monthly conference calls. The communication will be focused on defining the project, organizing the project proponents, establishing a governance entity and engaging the stakeholders. Ideally, one point of contact from each of the partners identified in this plan should be on the monthly conference calls. The city of Firebaugh will host and schedule the calls.

Schedule

The following provide a work plan for the one-year period from August 2015 to June 2016:

1. Develop draft Project Charter.
2. Identify Firebaugh Working Group.
 - a. Representatives from all the above organizations
 - b. A core team supplemented by a larger group that meets less frequently than the core team
3. Core team to develop a feasibility study proposal for consideration by DWR Small Communities Flood Risk Reduction Program. The proposal will be based on exploring alternative projects developed by the SJ BWFS with the objective of selecting a feasible alternative. The proposal needs to include evaluation of near term critical flood needs and phase approach.
4. Conduct feasibility and select a feasible project alternative.
5. Core team to develop proposal for implementing the selected feasible alternative. Proposal to include project description, scope of work, budget, and schedule.
6. Working Group to meet and brainstorm the different components of the proposal and finalize it.
7. Working Group to meet and brainstorm funding sources (supported by SJR Partnership memo)
8. Working Group to oversee the design of the project including environmental and permitting requirements.
9. Lead agency to bid the project construction work.
10. Start implementation of the construction of the project.

Quarterly Stakeholder Meeting Schedule for FY 2015/2016

Item	Date
Work Group Meeting	17-Dec-15
Work Group Meeting	17-Mar-16
Work Group Meeting	17-Jun-16