

Draft Meeting Summary

Virtual Public Meeting for Cache Slough Public Access Recreation Action Plan

May 4, 2023 | 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Overview

The Cache Slough Public Access Recreation Action Plan is a planning effort convened through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Partnership by Solano County, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). The purpose of the Virtual Public Meeting, the third in a series of public meetings, is to provide a progress update on the development of the Action Plan, share results of MOU Partners' evaluation and screening of potential recreation opportunities, and discuss recommendations for creating additional recreation opportunities in the future.

The presentation slides and a full recording of the meeting are available on the project website [here](#).

Welcome, Agenda Review, & Introductions

Ben Gettleman, Kearns & West (K&W) Facilitator, welcomed participants to the Virtual Public Meeting for the Cache Slough Public Access Recreation Action Plan (Action Plan). Ben reviewed the meeting objectives, agenda, and discussion guidelines, followed by introductions from the MOU Partners.

Steve Rotherth, Manager of the Division of Multibenefit Initiatives at DWR, provided opening remarks and welcomed attendees.

A list of workshop attendees and project team members is included in **Appendix A**.

Update on Action Plan Development

Erin Chappell, Bay Delta Regional Manager with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), presented on the purpose of the Action Plan which aims to identify opportunities for better and safer public access to recreation options in the Cache Slough region of the Delta. The planning effort is driven by land use changes, such as restoration and flood improvement projects, and this planning process will ensure that public access is considered in those conversations. Erin stated the advantages of the collaboration between DWR, CDFW, and Solano County, who together set common goals, priorities, and can also provide support and share resources with one another. Erin emphasized that not all project concepts identified in the Action Plan will be able to happen right away (if at all), but that the Action Plan provides guidance for future investment opportunities.

Erin reviewed feedback received from previous engagement activities, including the first two public meetings and an online survey. The outreach and engagement effort was designed to understand current and future potential uses of the area, concerns, and considerations for planning. Input will help the MOU Partners to explore and identify opportunities that balance needs and desires for recreation with existing land uses and ownership. Erin reviewed the project outreach and engagement timeline,

including public engagement opportunities between September 2022 and May 2023 and concluding this summer in 2023 with development of the final Action Plan and presentations to CDFW Directors, DWR Directors, and Solano County Board of Supervisors.

The presentation concluded with Erin’s acknowledgement of other planning processes happening in the region, and the recognition that the Cache Slough Action Plan is considering those efforts.

Evaluation of Potential Recreation Opportunities

Matt Franck, Jacobs Engineering, began the presentation by providing a brief update on the status of the Lookout Slough implementation process, which is concurrently happening in the region independent of the Action Plan. The presentation included concept designs for the publicly accessible boat launch on a new, degraded levee, as well as the east end of Liberty Island Road.

Matt provided a summary of ten potential recreation options identified through the public outreach processes to date and developed by MOU Partners.

The list of ten recreation options includes:

- A. Shag Slough East Access/Liberty Island Pedestrian Bridge
- B. Lindsey Slough Boat Launch (on or near Little Egbert Tract)
- C. Calhoun Cut Ecological Reserve Public Access
- D. Levee Improvements for Recreation Access
- E. Brown Road Boat Launch
- F. Dixon Boat Club (Bartlett Road) Partnership
- G. Lindsey Slough South Access
- H. Barker Slough
- I. Lower Peters Pocket
- J. Cliffhouse Fishing Access

Matt reminded participants of the evaluation criteria, which includes public safety and maintenance, public roads, public lands, water access, multiple uses, public support, and feasibility. A high-level takeaway from screening each recreation option/project concept using the evaluation criteria was that none of the options are foolproof – every option has its pros and cons. However, the Lindsey Slough Boat Launch (on or near Little Egbert Tract) appears to stand out as potentially feasible because it will have strong regional benefits, is favored by received public feedback, and is timely because of the simultaneously occurring Little Egbert Multi-Benefit Project within the region. Matt noted that it still has public access and ownership challenges that would need to be resolved before implementation, however.

Comments, Questions & Answers

Key themes from comments:

1. Interest in Calhoun Cut; seasonal access as an option
2. Emphasis on equitable access; prioritize opportunities that allow access for more people, including those who don’t have boats
3. Concern over loss of land-based access; including loss of access to Liberty Island

Individual comments and questions discussed aloud and via chat:

- **Comment (C):** Vehicle turn around is not expectable; RD 2068 needs to turn around 80 ton cranes etc. to reach pump station 5. The way it's designed it's impossible to get heavy equipment into pump 5 and back out. The road needs to go up to pump station 5 and again allow the road allow huge equipment to dive in and back out.
- **Question (Q):** I am curious why the Calhoun Cut improvements were deemed not feasible?
 - **Response (R):** Our understanding is that there's already some bank fishing happening in this area, some sanctioned and some not. It's important to note here that while there are a lot of good aspects of this option, the feasibility criterion is ranked low because it's an active wildlife restoration area for the benefit of endangered species. Also, its charter does not include public access. Although it's possible for this charter to be amended by going through CDFW, we see this as a limiting factor because of the ecological purposes of this reserve.
- **Q:** For Calhoun Cut, there seems to be some unsanctioned kayak access already happening there which is likely already causing some degradation. For the sake of preserving the reserve, it seems putting in some sort of boat ramp could help with that.
 - **R:** The primary purpose of CDFW's ecological reserves is for habitat and species. Where public access is compatible, we're encouraged to look at that. There is currently boat-only access onto that property, people can come in by boat if they launch in a different location. However, we are mindful of building infrastructure in our ecological reserves because as you begin to make access points, you need to provide other amenities and the footprint begins to grow. For this property, we have a couple fully protected species which we're thrilled to see doing well, but are particularly vulnerable during the spring (e.g. Black Rails). We want to make sure these species are protected, especially during their breeding and nesting seasons. The potential for impacts to the species that are the focus for that property is high and creates concern for us at CDFW.
- **Q:** What is the timeline for this MOU and the timescale of the vision? There are a few things in this project concept screening process that seem like they would come to the fore in a few years and are not immediately ready. Is this a first foray and as opportunities come to the queue, they will be pursued?
 - **R:** We will discuss this during the next presentation portion of the meeting. But yes, there is a tactical aspect of this planning effort: "what can we do now?" There is also a long view.
- **Q:** What is the reasoning for the low feasibility of the Shag Slough East Access/Liberty Island Pedestrian Bridge (option A)? Also, as a kayaker, I can't cross the Deep-Water Channel safely, not upstream when the current is flowing out, it can take an hour to an hour and a half. The east end access point is the closest for me to be able to access Liberty Island therefore the most feasible; the other access points get me onto the river but can't get me to the Liberty Island Tract Area, which at low tide is too low for boats. All the opportunities are interesting and exciting as well.
 - **R:** There are a few reasons for the low feasibility there, but the primary one is the land encumbrances on the east side. We are not able to build a new bridge to Liberty Island because of the inability to get that far south along Liberty Island Road. The

- encumbrances for the land there, in which DWR is in partnership with but does not own, are purely for mitigation purposes; there is not a recreation component.
- **C:** I have no need for a bridge there, although it would be convenient. I don't want to have to cross the Deep-Water Channel. It is unsafe to launch when large boats are on the water, so this is a safety perspective. Would prefer to see access on Shag Slough, if possible.
 - **R:** Lookout Slough and access there not in the screening process table because it's a separate process.
 - **C:** One of the centering factors leading up to this process, this context, is the loss of recreation access at an ecological reserve at Liberty Island, land access, etc. Approximately another 4,000 acres will be lost to access potentially with this Lookout Slough project. So I think it's good to continue to emphasize that while Calhoun Cut has its ecological sensitivities that we need to be mindful of, we shouldn't let that stop us from considering how we can continue to be able to make things feasible like parking lots and lanes. They are simple to build, even when you have to think about all the small things that go into it.
 - **Q:** Were any additional options identified during public comments periods that are not on the list? And if so, what was that process for removing those options? One I'm concerned about is access from Highway 84 before it hits the ferry point coming out of Rio Vista, at the southern end of Little Egbert Tract. Is that on there?
 - **R:** Little Egbert Tract is around areas B, D, and J on the map. It sounds like you're talking about an option that would be a new boat launch somewhere between Rio Vista and the Real McCoy Ferry, off Highway 84.
 - **C:** There are several different plans for flooding that tract of land, some of those include a channel inlet that traverses north/south through LE Tract starting at about the Real McCoy Ferry Tract. I recall putting notes on a map that indicated desire for parking access to drop a slough in that area if it were to be created.
 - **R:** One of the challenges of doing our Action Plan at the same time as the Little Egbert Planning process is making sure everything is synced up. As far as the Little Egbert Feasibility Study, there are some more focused options of things that could happen on the restored Little Egbert Tract, including what you're saying—a pull-off from Highway 84 with a personal craft launch. It is not on this map, but it is being considered as part of the Little Egbert Planning process. So even though it's not being showed here, it does not mean it's not under consideration.
 - **C:** Since it's close to a public road, there are some aspects with that option that might be attractive there.
 - **Q:** I am wondering about the positioning where the breaching/degradation of the levee would happen at Liberty Island, being within 500 feet of the sanctioned fishing area. Is there any way to extend that farther down towards the bridge? 500 feet sounds like a lot, but when you get two or three people fishing, you don't want to sit there and only have ten feet of bank space. Most of us fish because we like to be out in nature, if we have kids we want more room, etc. If there's more room there, I don't understand why the road has to be breached so early after the turn where we couldn't have more sanctioned bank fishing.
 - **R:** The lead planner for the state wasn't able to join us today, but she might say Lookout Slough has been through a multi-year planning process, culminating in the final design

that's starting to be implemented – they're under construction – and the final design is the prior action that dictates where those breaches occur. It seems there's not an opportunity to re-evaluate the prior decision-making on Lookout Slough, which has already been a substantial effort, and also renegotiate contracts, etc.

- **Q:** If you do kayak past the breach point, is the levee off-limits for walking and fishing off of?
 - **R:** My understanding is that the way the levee had been in the past was part of the State Plan of Flood Control (SPFC). The levee breaches are no longer part of the SPFC, so the need to serve a critical safety function is lessened. I'm not sure what the state is sanctioning or not sanctioning.
- **Q:** Why are trailered-boats limited from accessing the boat ramp being implemented at the Lookout Slough Restoration Project? Is this a consideration for a public use boat launch?
 - **R:** I don't know the specific answer to that. It would be possible to drive there, but that's only available for Agency O&M work or survey work for management objectives. Need to get back to you on this question.
 - **C:** Also, accessing the Liberty Island/Cache Slough area via a boat ramp from the Vacaville/Dixon area is important. The little Egbert tract option is a consideration but Rio Vista already has a few public and private boat ramps available just down stream. I think revisiting the Brown Road boat ramp or a partnership with the Dixon Boat Club should be considered. I'm not familiar with the Lower Peter's Pocket Restoration Project but that could also be a future consideration.
- **C:** I want to emphasize the significance of the loss of land-based access from Liberty Island. Mitigating for that loss in terms of increasing opportunities for boat-based recreationists is great, but that's limiting opportunities only for people who can afford boats, which is not everyone. There are groups that are disadvantaged that currently use it that I don't see benefiting from recreation mitigation being proposed here.
- **Q:** Regarding the Calhoun Cut and the proposed boat launch, I don't understand how the boat launch would significantly or negatively impact the ecological restoration or habitat for that ecological reserve. There's currently access for some but not everyone, so I don't understand what that whole proposal entails and if there's just land-based access or a boat ramp there, and who currently has access and is or is not allowed to use it?
 - **R:** When we envisioned what this might look like, a turn lane off Rio Dixon Road into a small parking area where you can launch into Calhoun Cut and get access down to Lindsey Slough. There's a physical footprint associated with this. We understand sometimes people may park on the side of the road and launch without any official authorization, or if they are in the public waterway on a boat from the east. While this group is not recommending unsanctioned access to this part of the slough, the real action crafted out of this recreation option – which involves the larger footprint – isn't recommended.
 - **R:** Anytime you're putting in infrastructure, even a small ramp for kayaks, comes with parking and other site amenities that help with cleanliness and safety, which creates a bigger footprint. We are particularly mindful of shoreline disturbance for the species that occur at that site. The increase in public access, particularly at certain times of the year, can be disruptive and have a negative impact on those species. It is antithetical to

the primary purpose of acquiring the property. We're concerned about the potential impacts of increased usage.

- **Q:** Was there an alternative to have seasonal access to that site at Calhoun Cut to avoid important nesting or breeding seasons? And if it's currently being used in an unsanctioned format, is that going to encourage more degradation, trash, etc., rather than formalizing it and providing some guidelines like parking and limited seasonal use?
 - **R:** We're still in the conceptual stage. How you control seasonal use is a factor to consider, because once the parking lot is there, it becomes a draw, then people ask why there isn't access to it, etc. We want to be mindful of these considerations. We've seen on a number of CDGW ecological reserves that once you open access to it, the demand also increases. However, hearing your concerns for land-based access, we want to explore opportunities at other sites for land-based access that aren't as sensitive.
- **Q:** Was a boat ramp considered on the south end of Little Egbert Tract?
 - **R:** Considering the regional versus local scale, it might be worth adding a new option for that part of Little Egbert Tract.

Recommendations for Creating Opportunities Moving Forward

Misty Kaltreider, Water and Natural Resources Program Manager at Solano County, presented recommendations heard from previous engagement and developed by the MOU Partners. Some recommendations to help move the Action Plan forward in the future include tracking funding sources, exploring public/private partnerships, exploring solutions to address long-term operations and management of recreation facilities, and including recreation in future restoration projects where it's compatible. Misty then provided examples of ways the MOU Partnership will continue to work together and evaluate opportunities as they arise.

Next Steps

Ben Gettleman reminded participants about the role of the MOU Partners in identifying potential recreation opportunities, and that the Action Plan provides a snapshot of recreation options that could exist. The goal of the Action Plan is to serve as an inventory that will eventually help inform the prioritization and development of some of its concepts, given appropriate levels of support and feasibility – no one project has been decided upon yet.

This is intended to be the last public meeting for this phase of the planning process. When the Draft Action Plan is complete, it will be shared with the public online. After an open public comment period, the Final Action Plan will be presented to CDFW and DWR Directors, as well as the Solano County Board of Supervisors. It will serve as an iterative document, which will evolve and continue to track opportunities over time.

Adjourn

Steve Rothert, Misty Kaltreider, and Erin Chappell thank attendees for their participation in the conversation to find opportunities that will increase recreation in the Cache Slough region.

Materials from this meeting can be found on the Project website:

https://www.solanocounty.com/depts/rm/delta_and_water_programs/cache_slough_recreation.asp.

Appendix A Meeting Attendees

Meeting Attendees

Name	Affiliation
Aaron	Angel
Jeff	Barich
Tara	Beltran
Doug	Brown
Kathy	Bunton
David	Burke
Eva	Bush
Joshua	Bush
Melissa	Cansdale
Alejandro	Contreras
Mark	Cowan
Dale	Crossley
Taylor	Dahlke
Ken	Dentley
Paul	Dirksen
Maureen	Downing-Kunz
Bryan	Ehresman
Matt	Franck
Stephanie	Freed
Virginia	Gardiner
Megan	Gigliani
Andrew	Goodman
Marc	Hanson
Mike	Hardesty
Brighton	Heard
Erin	Huang
Daurice	Kalfsbeek Smith
Patricia	Kelly
Ed	Larue
Megan	Leroy
Karlyn	Lewis
Trevor	Long
Mitch	Mashburn
Amy	Merrill
Osha	Meserve
Gerald	Mills

John	Morgan
Leticia	Morris
Pat	Negroni
Sally	Negroni
Devin	O'Dea
Rick	Oneill
Martha	Ozonoff
Elizabeth	Patterson
Dan	Ramos
Josh	Restad
Steve	Rothert
Ben	Salazar
Melanie	Saucier
Amy	Sharp
Steve	Shaw
Lisa	Shipley
Sadie	Smith
Julie	Spezia
James	Stone
Rachel	Taylor
Mort	Triplett
Sean	Tully
Kristyne	Van Skike
Mary-Ann	Warmerdam
Bill	Wentworth
Lisa	Williams
Nicolas	Zanotti

MOU Partners and Project Staff

Name	Affiliation
Misty Kaltreider	Solano County
Dick Tzou	Solano County
Charlotte Biggs	CA Department of Water Resources
Steve Rothert	CA Department of Water Resources
Mike Roberts	CA Department of Water Resources
Erin Chappell	CA Department of Fish and Wildlife
Greg Martinelli	CA Department of Fish and Wildlife
Ben Gettleman	Kearns & West
Matt Marvin	Kearns & West
Marlys Jeane	Kearns & West
Matt Franck	Jacobs
Katie Stone	Jacobs
Rebecca McNeil Freeman	Jacobs