

# Maintenance of Mitigation and Habitat Enhancement Projects

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*The Rural LMA Work Group (WG) was established in late 2012 with the purpose of serving as a forum for the California Central Valley Flood Control Association to identify problems that are unique to rural areas and seek solutions for inclusion in the Regional Flood Management Plans. The Rural LMA WG identified eleven topics of interest and has prepared a paper describing each topic from the perspective of the Rural LMA WG. These papers continue to be developed by the Rural LMA WG and are therefore subject to revision.*

## Topic Statement

The increasing number of mitigation planting and habitat enhancement projects within the channels, bypasses, and other floodways of the Sacramento and San Joaquin River flood systems together with existing 'legacy' mitigation projects is compounding the already challenging regulatory environment faced by levee maintainers. Failure to properly plan, maintain and manage mitigation and habitat enhancement projects is resulting in adverse impacts to hydraulic capacity, conveyance, and ability to inspect, monitor, and flood fight. Further, plantings are migrating beyond their original project limits and the lack of "safe harbor" agreements is creating financial and operational constraints for the LMAs.

## Description of Topic

Rural LMAs recognize that when trying to accomplish specific goals, such as species recovery for example, there is value in implementing mitigation and enhancement projects within the flood control system. However, such projects are often implemented without:

- establishing that public safety has primacy over other benefits provided by the flood control system;
- identifying and securing sustainable funding for long term maintenance;
- defining maintenance roles and responsibilities;
- obtaining long-term (programmatic) regulatory permissions to perform levee maintenance without the need for additional mitigation;
- providing safeguards to neighboring landowners and levee maintaining agencies when the projects migrate beyond their original project limits.

Failure to account for these considerations has resulted in adverse impacts to the carrying capacity and performance of the Sacramento and San Joaquin River flood systems. Further, LMAs are adversely affected both financially and operationally as they cannot perform proper levee maintenance due to increased costs, permitting, or inability to access, inspect and perform repairs within those sites. This in turn can impact the status of the levee system in the PL 84-99 Rehabilitation and Inspection Program.

## Relevance to the RFMP

The RFMP process provides an avenue to evaluate how mitigation planting and habitat enhancement projects are planned, implemented, and maintained currently, and identify improvements to the process. The RFMP process also allows the opportunity to examine in a comprehensive regional manner, the goals, objectives and necessity for mitigation planting and habitat enhancement within the flood control system.