

5 Management Coordination Analysis

This chapter summarizes and assesses issues related to coordination of management activities between land management agencies found within the Sacramento River corridor from Red Bluff to Colusa. Land managers with the resource agencies in the study area provided input on current and future management coordination needs during interviews (see Section 4.3, Land and Facility Manager Interviews) and at facilitated meetings. Those involved in this analysis included managers from Sacramento River Conservation Area Forum (Forum), The Nature Conservancy, Sacramento River Partners, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), California Department of Water Resources, Department of Fish and Game (DFG), Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), Department of Boating and Waterways, and State of California Reclamation Board. This chapter contains two sections: managers' descriptions of existing management coordination efforts, and their perspectives on opportunities and constraints for management coordination in the future. Recommendations for management coordination, based on this analysis, are provided in Chapter 7.

5.1 Existing Management Coordination Efforts

The managers interviewed as part of this study indicated that they participate in some type of coordination and interaction with managers from other agencies. Three people reported that they regularly work together with other agencies and felt that there is adequate coordination. It was noted that most conservation projects affecting the river corridor involve coordination on the part of the public and private management entities. However, despite the fact that this coordinated management does take place, the majority of managers expressed that additional coordination would be desirable.

Some managers provided specific examples of current coordinated management efforts. Two managers cited the Discovery Center as an example of how agencies are working together in a publicly successful fashion. Three managers mentioned interagency memorandums of understanding (MOUs) or land leases for cooperative management of land along the river, however, some respondents felt these were not a panacea for the coordination needs in the area. Five managers cited the Forum as the major means of coordinated management at present. Other efforts described by managers included interagency management plans and partnerships between agencies and non-profit organizations for grants, property acquisitions and habitat restoration. Management participants indicated that coordination efforts are often informal because of the rural character of the area, and that communication is enhanced

because people know one another and can call on one another for assistance. Informal coordination efforts mentioned by managers included the following:

- sharing of equipment and facilities
- state-funded resource protection programs
- conducting public meetings
- the central information center at California State University, Chico, and
- private landowner networks.

From the interviews and the management team meeting, one important issue identified was the limited coordination between law enforcement and resource agencies. Some managers reported that some level of informal coordination exists with law enforcement personnel, but others indicated that additional coordination was needed. Managers indicated that law enforcement coordination tends to occur at a local level and for large recreation events such as the Labor Day tubing event, or for the opening day of salmon fishing. The law enforcement efforts were thought to be more reactionary and not as proactive as many managers would desire.

5.2 Opportunities and Constraints for Management Coordination

Opportunities and constraints expressed by managers fall into two categories: “management coordination approaches”, and “management goals and subject areas”.

5.2.1 Management Coordination Approach

To address the need for increased management coordination, managers suggested that the public agencies and private conservation managers develop a more formalized management coordination program. Suggestions were made several times throughout the interview and meeting processes that formal planning meetings should occur at least once or twice annually. A consensus was developed that a formalized structure should be developed that includes the public agencies and private entities responsible for the management of conservation and recreation properties along the river corridor. This organization would hold regular meetings to identify and facilitate opportunities for mutual support, sharing of information and improvements to both ecosystem and recreation objectives. It was noted that this structure should include the range of public use land managers: federal, state, county, private nonprofit entities and private for-profit entities.

Other opportunities for enhanced management coordination were identified during the meeting and interviews. Managers indicated that opportunities for increased formal coordination exist in the form of interagency agreements such as MOUs, permits, and leases. The 2001 MOU between USFWS, DFG, and DPR was cited as an existing, broad commitment between those agencies. It was also noted that more specific MOUs or interagency agreements could be

established to transfer management of a site from one resource agency to another, or compensate the other agency for managing the land while ownership is retained by the original resource agency. The transfer of management using interagency agreements represents an opportunity for agencies to overcome budgetary or operational constraints when attempting to implement maintenance or restoration actions. These agreements would allow agencies to share expertise and resources, thereby reducing constraints.

Barriers or constraints to coordinated management approaches were also discussed. Constraints mentioned by respondents included limited funding, differing missions of agencies, individual personalities, high turnover rate for agency personnel, physical and geographic barriers, lack of a lead agency, timing, and differing statutory requirements.

Some managers emphasized that field representatives should form the core of the coordinated management effort, with one person asserting, “I strongly recommend coordinated resource manager meetings with field representatives and not from upper management.”

Another manager suggested the following approach to guide coordinated management of the area:

“Ultimately from the point of view of the resources, I would look at this much like the Fish and Wildlife Service’s planning process is going: we really need to care for natural resources first. What does wildlife need? What are system requirements? Is there enough of the right kind of [coordinated] management to support the long-term sustainability for habitat for the kind of wildlife you’re trying to perpetuate? The underlying basic ecosystem requirements need to be met first. Then once you’ve determined [how] you need to do that, the way in which you allow people to use and recreate and access the land needs to happen in a well thought-out coordinated fashion, [ensuring] that the public has access to as much of that area that is reasonable before you endanger trust values.”

In addition to formal coordination approaches, suggestions were made for improved informal coordination. Suggestions for maintaining good working relationships with other managers on a day-to-day basis included mutual site visits and frequent informal communication that would support coordinated land management on a regular basis.

5.2.2 Management Goals and Subject Areas

Management goals are the goals each agency or landowner group is trying to achieve based on their group’s mission or mandate. Management subject areas are the topics of mutual concern or interest where management coordination can help the various management entities to

achieve their goals. This section provides a discussion of the management goals and potential management subject areas, primarily related to public recreation access issues.

The various public agencies and non-profit landowner groups have differences and commonalities in their goals as related to recreation use of the lands along the Sacramento River. For instance, while some agencies are mandated to protect resources and to carefully evaluate recreation use on the lands they manage, others are, by their mission, committed to public recreation as their primary objective. At the same time these entities often overlap in terms of their expressed goals related to resource protection.

A desire to be clear and proactive and not reactive to any differences in goals or objectives was expressed by managers during both the management meeting and the interview process. The following suggestion was provided for how to approach reaching a common goal:

“Develop a [written] coordinated vision for what you want the river to be now, taking into account the dynamic nature of the river and retaining things so that they are not lost. There needs to be a conscientious effort to retain/preserve the natural and ecological components, despite pressures from population growth and industrialization.”

Participants also asserted that there are numerous subjects areas that could benefit from a more structured coordinated management program. Subject areas of mutual concern identified by managers as important for coordination included:

- funding
- information sharing and monitoring
- public outreach and education
- sharing of resources and expertise
- access and signage
- timing and use of adjacent lands
- permits
- trail systems
- visitor facilities
- public access
- special events
- law enforcement coordination

Opportunities and constraints with regard to management coordination on these subjects are provided below.

5.2.2.1 Funding

Managers mentioned funding and staffing shortages as a primary reason for the lack of coordination among agencies. Funding constraints limit the coordination that is possible for

facilities maintenance and improvements to public access. This constraint is increased in the short term by the current economic conditions, which have dictated budget cutbacks for federal, state, and local governments as well as private entities. Even assuming an economic turnaround and improved budget situations in the future, it is clear that funding limitations are a constraint that must be addressed on an ongoing basis. In response to this problem, coordination efforts should focus on functional economies and the use of public and private funding sources that can supplement traditional agency budget sources.

5.2.2.2 Information Sharing and Monitoring

An information clearinghouse was suggested to provide an opportunity for people to access accurate information about the area, current planning and management activities, as well as acquisition and ownership information. Having this information readily available would provide opportunities for increased coordination in resource, public access, and other planning efforts. In addition, improvements in information access would also encourage more assistance and involvement by entities not participating in coordinated efforts relating to land management in the river corridor. A web page was also suggested to provide contact information for questions or concerns to primary points of contact for different agencies or stakeholders. Species and habitat distribution, as well as public recreation access were mentioned as the types of information that would be helpful in assisting coordinated planning efforts. It was also suggested that all agencies would benefit from more institutionalized sharing of scientific knowledge and peer reviewing of decisions and indicators.

GIS incompatibilities were mentioned as a constraint to sharing of information. A common GIS database was suggested to overcome this problem and increase coordination. This common database would use standard datums so that agencies could share and merge data files and use them for management assistance. Such a database, accessible to managers and agencies, was mentioned for tracking and sharing information on land ownership and affiliation (e.g., HCP programs). Other area-wide system databases would help disseminate information between agencies, with the information then synthesized to share with the public.

A cooperative opportunity exists for the greater use of science-based management. Scientific information gathered during projects could be shared with interagency-defined designations of common indicators and functions (e.g., revetted bank area vs. natural bank area; habitat area protected vs. habitat area protected/to be restored; indicator species) to help determine the success of projects. It was suggested that river monitors, including public volunteers, could help gather scientific information about water quality and unpermitted activities.

5.2.2.3 Public Outreach and Education

There was a consensus that coordinated, expanded public outreach was needed to adequately inform the public and special interest groups about conservation programs and related recreational opportunities along the river. One manager identified a need for public education about natural area protection, especially in conservation areas. It was noted that programs facilitating public outreach and education were necessary to inform the public about where and what kind of recreational opportunities are allowable in conservation areas and to communicate the reasons behind areas of limited access. Public information centers, such as kiosks and science centers, were also identified as tools to assist in such an educational outreach process.

5.2.2.4 Sharing of Resources and Expertise

Another important opportunity for cooperation was described by several managers that would involve sharing resources and expertise among facilities management and local governments regarding maintenance and other facilities needs. For example, interagency management of mitigation properties and borrow pit sites was mentioned by several managers as an important coordination opportunity. Other activities mentioned as important to coordinate include the maintenance of sanitary facilities, fueling stations and boat ramps. The siltation of boat ramps was repeatedly noted as difficult to keep up with, particularly because ramp maintenance requires partners to complete different components. A lack of understanding of the region's geomorphology is a potential factor in improper design and placement of ramps. This, in turn, leads to increased maintenance needs. Coordination on the development of better ramp designs and locations that fit more properly with a dynamic river environment is needed to reduce long-term maintenance costs.

5.2.2.5 Access and Signage

The lack of access signage in the area creates confusion for the public, particularly regarding public vs. private property access. A public trust easement applies to the area below the ordinary high-water mark (OHWM) regardless of property ownership. However, coordinated action is needed to define this area through signage or some other appropriate communication device, and to inform the public in practical terms as to where the OHWM is to reduce confusion and to reduce trespassing. It was noted, however, that given the frequent flooding along the OHWM, funding for maintenance and replacement of signing could be a constraint.

5.2.2.6 Timing and Use of Adjacent Lands

Another constraint to cooperative management was identified in the difference among agencies and other landowners regarding their goals and recreation uses. For instance, safety can become an issue when hunting is permitted on lands that are adjacent to non-hunting lands or

non-hunting uses occur during peak hunting times. Expanded communication efforts were cited as were mutual review of land management plans as methods to address this concern.

5.2.2.7 Maintenance and Operations Permits

Permitting difficulty was a common issue raised among managers. The need for program-level and umbrella-type permits was expressed to reduce the time and expenses involved in the various counties or agencies each repeatedly applying for and obtaining all the appropriate permits needed for maintenance and improvement activities such as dredging, boat ramp maintenance, cleaning of sanitary facilities, and maintenance of fueling stations. The problem is further confounded when permit issuance is delayed, leading to more funding losses and loss of access to facilities. Programmatic DFG permits and general permits that do not expire after one year were mentioned as recent improvements to the permitting programs. The permit application process for events such as boat races was another constraint discussed by some managers. The sharing of information and expertise in permitting or possibly some type of joint effort to obtain permits was identified as desirable.

5.2.2.8 Trail System Development

Trail planning in the region is more conceivable now that increased acreage along the Sacramento River is in public ownership. Coordinated management will be needed to determine where trails may and may not be built based on resource protection goals, availability of rights of way, and both public interest and private landowner concerns. In addition, the river is a *de facto* boat trail that is likely to see increased use over time. Increased numbers of river users will require coordination to plan efficiently for public needs and resource protection concerns.

5.2.2.9 Visitor Center Facilities Benefiting the Local Area

The need to coordinate on consideration of a shared visitor center was expressed. It was noted that the public would benefit from having a center within the region, including a greater understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies and the importance and functions of the Sacramento River within the region. There are a number of popular, successful visitor centers within the greater region, but none are located within the study area. The desirability of locating such a center in the Pine Creek / Hamilton City area was identified because of the accessibility of the area, the substantial number of entities with land and facilities in the area and the potential for improvements to the levee system in the area.

5.2.2.10 Public Access

The need to coordinate on the planning and management of the range of public access facilities and amenities, such as road access, parking lots, and camping facilities exists. While the type

and location of public facilities will be based on the missions and goals of the landowners, the overall interrelationship between access sites and facilities should be considered.

One respondent suggested that managers explore the potential to “create greater ‘win-win’ opportunities for easements, event access, invitations to particular segments of the public, etc., to provide some ‘controlled access’.”

5.2.2.11 Special Event Coordination

Special events such as tubing and other recreation events require increased cooperation among managers, including permits and one-time easements to provide limited, controlled access, and coordination with law enforcement personnel. Tradeoffs between the rights of the participants, other recreation users, and property ownership must be weighed against the constraints of habitat impacts, public safety, and law enforcement capabilities.

5.2.2.12 Law Enforcement Coordination

Managers and law enforcement personnel need to have an increased understanding of who to coordinate with and of jurisdictional responsibilities. Opportunities may exist to share resources and expertise and hold training sessions. An annual meeting with managers and law enforcement representatives of resource agencies, county sheriff departments, and other local law enforcement entities may help facilitate this objective.