

Plan to Minimize Impacts to Adjacent Landowners
Elkhorn Basin: River Ranch Conservation Easement Project
Yolo County, California

Program Background

The Flood Corridor Program (FCP) was created by the “Safe Drinking Water, Clean Water, Watershed Protection and Flood Protection Act of 2000” (Proposition 13). Current funding comes from voter approved Proposition 1E, the “Disaster Preparedness and Flood Prevention Bond Act of 2006” (Public Resources Code Section 5096.800 et seq, Division 5, Chapter 1.699, Article 4, specifically Public Resources Code 5096.825). The Program is authorized to fund projects providing non-structural approaches to flood management, including the acquisition and restoration of wildlife habitat and agricultural land preservation. Program guidelines require the applicant, in conjunction with the Department of Water Resources (DWR); develop a plan to minimize the impacts on adjacent landowners prior to acquiring any interest in land.

Water Code Section 79041 states: “Prior to acquiring an easement or other interest in land pursuant to this article, the project shall include a plan to minimize the impacts on adjacent landowners. The plan shall include but not be limited to, an evaluation of the impact on floodwaters, the structural integrity of affected levees, diversion facilities, customary agricultural husbandry practices and timber extraction *operations, and an evaluation with regard to the maintenance required for any facilities that are proposed to be constructed or altered.*”

Project Overview

The Flood Corridor Program (FCP), in partnership with The Trust for Public Land (TPL), will be contributing \$8.9 million to acquire an agricultural conservation easement on 2,962 acres of property along the Sacramento River in eastern Yolo County, known as the Elkhorn Basin: River Ranch property. These 2,962 acres are identified on the map accompanying this plan. The land is characterized as agricultural land planted in walnut orchards, row crops, and rotated fallow fields. The project proposes to purchase an agricultural conservation easement on this acreage and achieve the overall goals of conserving agricultural land and reducing flood risk by protecting property that cannot be made safe from flooding. The specific objective for this project is to convey an agricultural conservation easement on the property so the property continues to be used for agricultural production, remains as open space and is not developed with structures susceptible to flood damage.

Evaluation of Impact of Acquisition on Floodwaters

Elkhorn Basin: River Ranch lies between the Yolo Bypass and the Sacramento River in a floodplain protected by levees on all sides. The Elkhorn Basin comprises Reclamation District 1600 (RD 1600) and is susceptible to flooding in a flood larger than the design standards for the levees on the Sacramento River. Because River Ranch will continue in the present agricultural use (as is true for other properties within RD 1600), it is presumed that the RD 1600 levees will be maintained to current standards and that there will be no change in the levee maintenance practices or elevation other than for RD 1600 to improve the levees to current standards as deficiencies are identified and as funding becomes available. Because the Elkhorn Basin will be neither no more nor less likely to flood than it does now, adjoining

flood elevations should not change, and there will be no change in the risk of flooding to either River Ranch or adjoining properties within the Basin. In the event the Elkhorn Basin floods during a major storm event, the agricultural operators would be expected to pump the standing water back into the adjoining waterways to the best of their ability subject to resource limitations and return the basin to agricultural production.

Evaluation of Impacts on Structural Integrity of Affected Levees

The levees surrounding the Elkhorn Basin have been maintained by the property owners or RD 1600 managers and will continue to be maintained by RD 1600. Nothing in the acquisition of the conservation easement on the River Ranch property would change these actions and responsibilities.

Evaluation of Impacts on Diversion Facilities

The existing agricultural improvements of the Elkhorn Basin: River Ranch property includes irrigation diversion and drainage facilities that are sized to meet crop production needs. Because Elkhorn Basin: River Ranch would continue to be farmed, there would be no need to make significant changes in the diversion and drainage works for continued agricultural use or other routine maintenance. However, there may be a need for rehabilitation or replacement of facilities from time to time.

Evaluation of Impacts on Customary Agricultural Husbandry Practices

It is the intention of the Elkhorn Basin: River Ranch landowner to maintain agricultural husbandry practices in their existing form; it is not anticipated that the cropping regime on the property will change in any significant way. This agricultural production is consistent with agricultural production on nearby properties.

Evaluation of Impacts on Timber Extraction Operations

At this time, there are no timber extraction operations in the Elkhorn Basin, and it is unlikely that there would be any at any time in the future, given the nature of the agricultural production that takes place there.

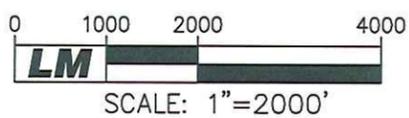
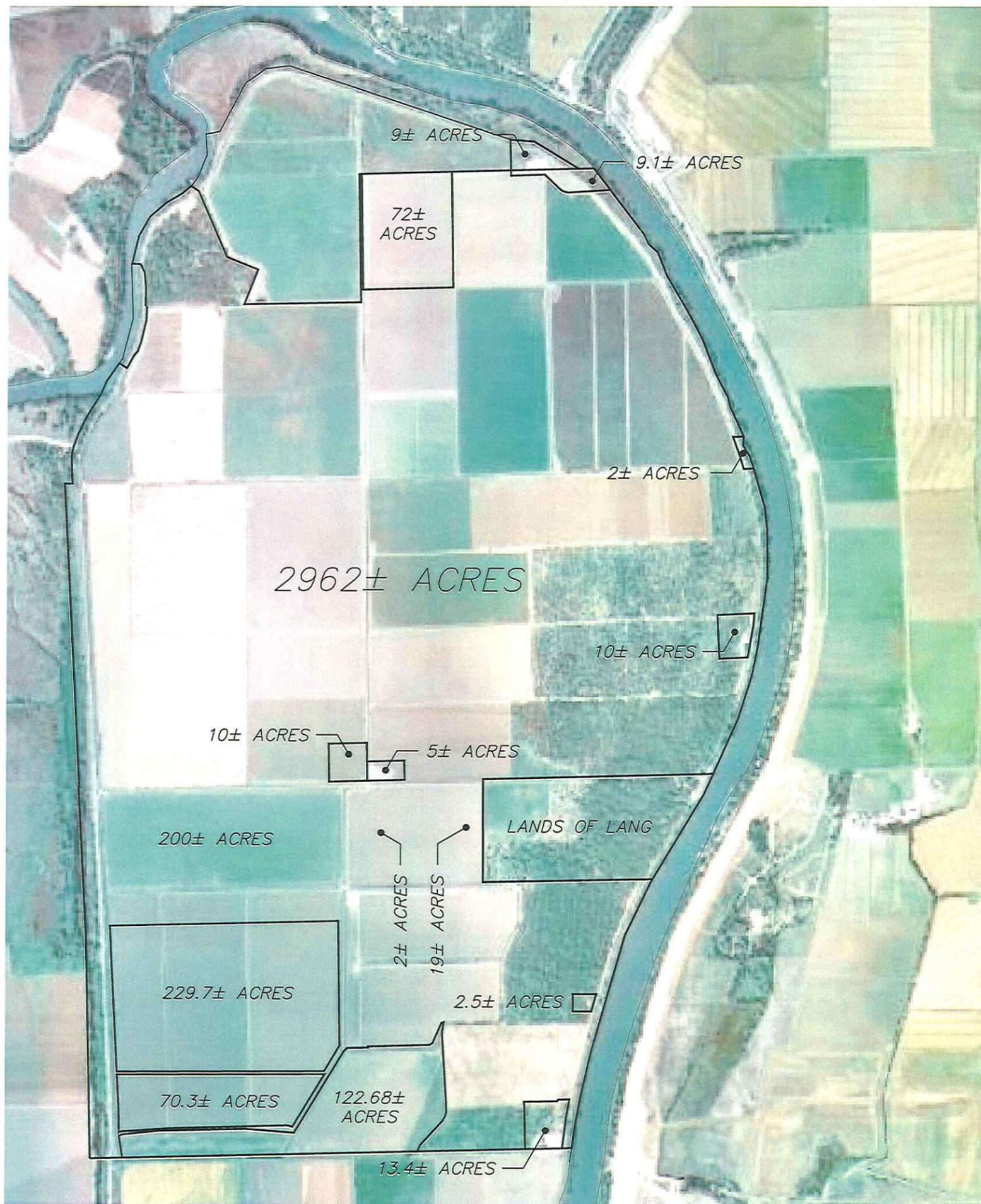
Evaluation of Impacts on Maintenance of Any Facilities Proposed to be Altered or Constructed

The Elkhorn Basin presently has a number of structures and improvements that are part of the ongoing agricultural operations. Because the intention of all parties is to continue the agricultural uses of the property relatively unchanged, those structures and improvements that are part of the operation will likely be maintained. It is further noted that there are no non-agricultural improvements on the proposed 2,962 acre conservation easement area.

Conclusion

In summary, the project and its subsequent maintenance will not have significant adverse impacts on existing adjoining property owners, land use practices, or flood control facilities. In addition to conserving agricultural land, the proposed project removes future development pressure from property that cannot feasibly be made safe from flooding.

Attachment: Map of Proposed Acquisition



Christopher W. Lerch
 CHRISTOPHER W. LERCH
 NOVEMBER 21, 2012
 DATE



EXHIBIT TO ACCOMPANY A DESCRIPTION
SACRAMENTO RIVER RANCH, LLC
 BEING PORTIONS OF SECTIONS 1, 2, 3, 10 AND 11,
 TOWNSHIP 10 NORTH, RANGE 3 EAST, MDM,
 AND SECTIONS 25, 26, 27, 34, 35 AND 36,
 TOWNSHIP 11 NORTH, RANGE 3 EAST, MDM,
 UNINCORPORATED AREA OF YOLO COUNTY, CA

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 SHEET 1 OF 1 NOVEMBER 21, 2012

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