

# Supervisors to look at impact of bypass flooding on ag land

Plans to increase the frequency and duration of flooding in the Yolo Bypass to preserve fish habitat likely can be done with minimal impact to Yolo County's agricultural industry, says Supervisor Jim Provenza of Davis.

Provenza and his colleagues on the Yolo County Board of Supervisors will receive a report Tuesday from UC Davis researchers that outlines the impact of increased flooding on crop yield and the regional economy.

The flooding is a major component of the Bay Delta Conservation Plan but has raised concerns about the impact on Yolo County's economy if significant portions of the county's ag land were to remain underwater and unplanted.

Before, said Provenza, "we could surmise what the impact would be, but didn't have any data."

Now, he said, researchers, led by Professor Richard Howitt of the UCD department of agricultural and resource economics, have looked at 25 years of flooding patterns and crop variations and their report shows "there are ways to do this without much impact."

The issue boils down to the date on which the release of water through the Fremont Weir and into the bypass ends.

Working with county staff as well as farmers, the researchers found the impact on Yolo County's agricultural economy increases as the period of flooding extends later and later into the year.

If flooding ends by Feb. 15, the report says, "agriculture is largely unaffected."

But as the end date for flooding is pushed further and further back, the cost to the county in terms of lost revenue grows from \$241,000 per year for a Feb. 15 cut-off date to \$8.9 million if the end date is May 15.

"\$241,000 is much easier to deal with ... for whoever it is that will have to make us whole," Provenza noted. "If we're talking about \$8 million ... no one has the money to compensate us for that and we're not a rich county."

Provenza also said the report shows the benefit to the fish habitat is significant with the earlier cut-off date "and the benefits after that are speculative."

The report notes that the latest end date for bypass flooding — May 15 — is a date that has been cited as important for splittail, a minnow native to the Central Valley that has in

the past been listed as a threatened species. But May 15, the report says, is also a cut-off date after which farmers said they simply would not be able to plant crops.

Researchers will present the full report to the board during the supervisors' regular meeting at 10 a.m. Tuesday in the Board of Supervisors' chambers at 625 Court St. in Woodland. The release of the report will mark the start of a monthlong public comment period ending on June 15.

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