Yolo Habitat Conservancy

County of Yolo • City of Davis • City of Winters • City of West Sacramento
City of Woodland • University of California, Davis

Los Rios South Site

Candidate Site Recommendation Summary

Recommendation: Yolo Habitat Conservancy staff recommend approval of the Los Rios South Site as a candidate Yolo HCP/NCCP conservation easement site to protect, enhance, and restore the corridor of valley foothill riparian habitat along Putah Creek. Additionally, enrollment of the site would contribute to a variety of HCP/NCCP enrollment objectives, including: enroll pre-permit lands for the reserve system and restore or create up to 956 acres of wetlands and riparian natural community (L-1.1), support a corridor of patches of woody and herbaceous riparian vegetation in the Putah Creek floodplain within Planning Unit 9 (L-1.5), enroll cultivated lands natural community on public baseline lands as pre-permit reserve lands (NC-CL1.2), restore and manage valley foothill riparian natural community within the Putah Creek corridor to create larger nodes of riparian community along narrow riparian stretches (NC-VFR1.2), protect and maintain at least 20 Swainson's hawk nest trees (SH1.3), protect modeled yellow-billed cuckoo habitat (WYBC1.1), protect modeled least Bell's vireo habitat (LBV1.1), and protect occupied valley elderberry longhorn beetle habitat along Lower Cache Creek (VELB1.1).[1]

Site Name: Los Rios South Site
Area being considered for enrollment: ~255 acres
Planning Unit: 9 (Lower Putah Creek) and 16 (Yolo Basin Plains)
Priority Land Acquisition Area: Priority 1
Proposed Enrollment Type: Pre-permit land conservation easement
Primary Land Cover Types: cultivated lands, valley foothill riparian, and open water

Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) Evaluation Summary:
HCP/NCCP covered species habitat observed at the time of the STAC site visit conducted on August 29, 2024:

- **Swainson's Hawk:** occupied nesting and natural lands foraging habitat
- **Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle:** occupied elderberry shrubs and potential for restoration
- **Western Pond Turtle:** occupied aquatic and upland habitat
- **Yellow-Billed Cuckoo:** nesting and foraging habitat
- **Least Bell's Vireo:** nesting and foraging habitat
- **White-Tailed Kite:** nesting and natural lands foraging habitat
- **Tricolored Blackbird:** cultivated lands foraging habitat
- **Burrowing owl:** cultivated lands foraging habitat

The STAC has made the following recommendation:
The STAC recommends approval of the Los Rios South site for inclusion in the HCP/NCCP reserve system. The site contributes to HCP/NCCP goals and objectives, offers current and future habitat elements for eight

[1] *The descriptions for the Yolo HCP/NCCP objectives listed here are summarized. Please see Yolo HCP/NCCP Table 6-3 for the full text associated with each objective.*

Covered Species, and meets species and patch-size requirements on its own and in conjunction with adjacent sites for VELB, Swainson's hawk, white-tailed kite, northwestern pond turtle, and least Bell's vireo.

The Los Rios South site lies within the Putah Creek corridor and offers significant benefits to conservation within the region. Overstory trees along the riparian corridor, primarily cottonwood, walnut, and willow, provide important nesting habitat for Swainson's hawk and white-tailed kite. The Putah Creek corridor is among the most important nesting areas for Swainson's hawk in the Sacramento Valley and several nest sites have been documented on the property. The riparian corridor supports potentially occupied habitat for yellow-billed cuckoo and least Bell's vireo. Western pond turtles have been documented along the creek, including an observation made during the STAC site visit, and evidence of VELB occupancy was observed on elderberry shrubs within the riparian corridor on the property during the STAC site visit. The agricultural portion of the site provides foraging habitat for Swainson's hawk and white-tailed kite.

The City of Davis, who owns the property, is willing to consider expanding the riparian corridor on the site and allowing other restoration and enhancement activities that would further increase the already significant habitat values of the site. Riparian restoration could increase nesting habitat for a variety of bird species, facilitate VELB mitigation, and improve instream habitat for western pond turtle and other aquatic species. Widening and densifying the riparian corridor could also improve habitat for yellow-billed cuckoo and least Bell's vireo. The agricultural portion of the site has the potential to be enhanced to support burrowing owl and tricolored blackbird habitat.