

A photograph of a wetland area. In the foreground, there are tall, dry reeds and a wooden structure made of three vertical posts and two horizontal beams. The structure is partially submerged in a body of water. The water is dark blue and reflects the sky. In the background, there is a line of trees and a hillside under a clear blue sky.

**Chicken Ranch Rancheria
2020 Wetland Program Plan**



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Chicken Ranch Rancheria of Me-
Wuk Indians of California

Jamestown, CA

September 2020

This document has been read and approved by Chicken Ranch Tribal Council

Lloyd Mathiesen, Tribal Chairman

Date

Purpose

Wetland program plans (WPP) are voluntary plans developed by States and Tribes that spell out what the Tribe and State plan to do with their wetland programs over time. This document is to outline the goals, planned actions, and specific activities for the Chicken Ranch Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians of California's wetland program over the next 6 years.

Background

Tribal history

Chicken Ranch Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians of California (Tribe) was established in 1908 by Secretary Order. The reservation consisted of 40 acres with 7 assignments. In 1958 the Tribe was terminated and removed of federal status through the California Rancheria Termination Act. Most Tribal Members lost their land. When the Tribe was reestablished in 1985, the only remaining Tribal Member still living on the reservation was Inez Mathieson. All current Tribal Members are direct descendants from Inez. Because the Tribe only regained their status in 1985, the Tribal Government is fairly young. Consequently, the Tribe is just now establishing environmental programs.

The Tribe is also just now being able to establish important resources for the tribal community. For example building a new tribal administration office, building a drinking water plant, upgrading the wastewater plant, expanding economic development options, and upgrading internet infrastructure are all upcoming projects for the Tribe.

Tribal Lands

The Tribe currently only owns 15 acres of the original 40 acres of the Rancheria and 9 of those acres are in trust. However, the Tribe has slowly been purchasing land in the area to regain own their traditional territory. The Tribe currently owns 52 acres in trust and 1,512 acres in fee. Most of the Tribal Lands resides on a hill coming down from Table Mountain. Woods Creek and Slate Creek are the two prominent streams that flow through Tribal Lands. However, there are other streams, drainages, ponds, and springs known on Tribal Lands (see Figure 1). Wetland delineations have been conducted on parcels that are currently going through the fee to trust application. However, parcels that were put into trust a long time ago or parcels that are not going through the fee to trust process have not had wetlands delineated. Also, none of the wetlands on tribal lands have been assessed for health.

Currently only one Tribal Member lives on trust land. Over time the Tribe hopes to develop their land to provide homes and services for the Tribal Community. Before major development projects start, it is important to understand the location and health of wetlands on Tribal Lands.



- Wetlands
- Tribal Lands
- Trust
- Fee
- NHDFlowLine



Chicken Ranch Rancheria Property and Known Wetlands

Chicken Ranch Rancheria
 Wetlands: AES 2019, HELIX 2019, NWI 2018
 Aerial Photos: Tuolumne County 2016
 Parcels: Tuolumne County 2018
 Spatial Ref: NAD 83 CA State Plane III (ft)
 B. Hunter July 2, 2020

Importance of wetlands

Wetlands are important for ecosystems in general. They provide habitat that certain species of plants, animals, fish, and shellfish require. A loss of wetland can mean the loss of these plants, animals, fish, and shellfish. In fact, one third of species that have been listed as endangered live in wetlands. Many culturally important plants are found on these habitats. For example, sedges are used for basketry, watercress is used for food, wormwood/mugwort is used in ceremonies, rushes are used in medicine, and grapes were used in building homes.

Wetlands can also help with general hydrological processes by providing water storage, moderate ground water levels, efficiently transporting water and mitigate flooding. When wetlands collect water, they slowly release the water back into the environment. Doing this can help protect water availability and reduce unwanted flooding.

Finally wetlands can also reduce pollution. Wetlands filter pollutants prior to getting to waterbodies (improving water quality). Also wetlands have been found to hold carbon. This can reduce the impact of climate change.

Overall, protecting wetlands will benefit the Tribe. For instance, wetlands can prevent polluting the ponds on tribal land, wetlands could prevent pollution from run off of the parking lots, wetlands can decrease flooding, wetlands will provide habitat to plants that are important to Me-Wuk culture, wetlands will provide habitat to animals that are important to Me-Wuk culture, and wetlands can provide natural movement of water (instead of ditches, drain pipes, etc.).

Since the Tribe has many upcoming projects that will cause ground disturbance, it is important for the Tribe to know where their wetlands are and to understand the current health. This will allow the Tribe to see how development may impact the health of the wetlands.

Core Elements of an Effective Wetlands Program

In 2008, the U.S. EPA established the Core Elements of an Effective Wetland Program. These outline the core elements of a state or tribal wetland program, describes each Core Element, and provides a list of effective activities to choose from that can help build a comprehensive wetland program. The Core Elements of a State or Tribal Wetland Program include:

1. Monitoring and Assessment;
2. Regulatory activities including 401 certification;
3. Voluntary Restoration and Protection;
4. Water Quality Standards for wetlands. (Not relevant to this plan so will not be discussed)

Because the Tribe is in such an early stage of developing their wetlands program, element 1 (Monitoring and Assessment) will be the main focus of the current wetland program plan. However, a little bit of element 2 (Regulatory) and 3 (Voluntary Restoration and Protection) will also be included.

Element 1- Monitoring and Assessment

Summary

The U.S. EPA defines a monitoring and assessment program as the establishment and operation of appropriate devices, methods, systems and procedures necessary to monitor, compile, and analyze data on the condition of wetlands in a state or tribe. The U.S. EPA lists three objectives that help make up a comprehensive monitoring and assessment program:

1. Develop a monitoring and assessment strategy
2. Implement a sustainable monitoring program consistent with the wetland monitoring strategy
3. Incorporate monitoring data into agency decision-making

Within the Core Elements of an Effective Wetland Program document, the U.S. EPA lists actions that should be taken to help achieve each objective as well as a menu of activities as ideas on tasks that can be taken on to complete each action. Actions and activities relevant to the Tribe's Wetland Program will be listed in the Detailed timeline section of this document.

Tribal Need

Monitoring and assessing wetlands is the most important element for Chicken Ranch's wetland program. Though some delineations have been done, the Tribe is not completely sure of the locations of all of their wetlands. Also the Tribe does not have the capacity to determine the health of the wetlands. It is important for the Tribe to build its capacity to understand the location and health of its wetlands. Once this is complete, it is important for the Tribe to continue to monitor their wetlands. This is especially true because the Tribe is planning on developing a lot in the near future to provide needed infrastructure for the tribal community. It will be important to monitor how the wetlands are impacted by the development.

Element 2- Regulatory Activities

Summary

The U.S. EPA works in conjunction with Tribes to ensure that wetland regulatory and permit programs follow federal guidelines. For instance Tribes can get status to have their own CWA 401 certification program (prevents issuance of permits unless the Tribe signs off that water quality requirements are met) or CWA 404 program (regulates discharge or dredge into wetlands). Tribes themselves can also establish permitting programs independent of the EPA. The following objectives will provide for effective regulatory programs:

1. Clearly defining the jurisdictional scope of the program
2. Administer regulatory activities efficiently and consistently
3. Evaluate regulatory activities to ensure environmental results

As with element 1, the EPA also lists activities and actions that are stepping stones to reaching these objectives. Actions and activities relevant to the Tribe's Wetland Program will be listed in the Detailed timeline section of this document.

Tribal Need

Chicken Ranch staff do not have a lot of knowledge on the regulatory programs involved with wetlands. It will be useful for the Tribe to better understand the rules and jurisdiction of wetlands on tribal trust land and fee land. This will allow the Tribe to better understand where the Tribe might have the ability to utilize their self-determination and protect wetlands in a manner consistent to the Tribe's goals and needs.

Element 3- Voluntary Restoration and Protection

Summary

The U.S. EPA defines restoration as the manipulation of a former or degraded wetland's physical, chemical, or biological characteristics to return its natural functions. The U.S. EPA also defines protection as removing a threat or preventing the decline of wetland conditions. The following objects can help with restoration and protection efforts.

1. Clearly and consistently define restoration and protection goals throughout state or tribal territory;
2. Protect wetlands from degradation or destruction;
3. Restore wetland acres, condition, and function; and
4. Track progress over time, document results, and modify practices as appropriate

As stated above, with elements there are actions and activities that should be taken to help achieve each objective. The actions and activities that are relevant to the Tribe's Wetland Program will be listed in the Detailed timeline section of this document.

Tribal Need

Because the Tribe does not fully know the location or health of wetlands, the Tribe is not sure of whether or not there is a need to protect or restore wetlands. It is important for the Tribe to understand their wetlands so Tribal Council can determine if protection or restoration is necessary.

Overall goal, actions, and timeline

The focus of this Wetland Program Plan is to start up Chicken Ranch's Wetland Program. This includes understanding where wetlands are and the health of the wetlands. As the wetlands are better understood, this will also include understanding the regulations associated with wetlands that are found on Tribal Trust Land. During this time, Tribal Staff will need to educate Tribal Council and the Chicken Ranch Economic Development Corporation on wetlands as knowledge is gained. At the end of the plan Tribal Staff will work with Tribal Council to determine if and how wetlands should be protected.

Element 1- Monitoring and Assessment

	Action Name	Actions
Year 1	MA-1	Build staff capacity to conduct wetland delineations and monitoring in-house
Year 2-4	MA-2	Understand the locations of wetlands on tribal lands
Year 2-6	MA-3	Understand the health of wetlands on tribal lands
Year 5-6	MA-4	Conduct long term monitoring

Element 2- Regulatory Activities

	Action Name	Actions
Year 5-6	RA-1	Increase staff's ability to understand wetland related regulations and the possible jurisdictional scope that the tribe could have

Element 3- Voluntary Restoration and Protection

	Action Name	Action
Year 3-6	VRP-1	Providing outreach to staff, Tribal Council and Chicken Ranch Economic Development Corporation to so that they are knowledgeable on wetlands
Year 5-6	VRP-2	Over time prioritize which wetlands would be beneficial to protect
Year 6	VRP-3	Talk with Council to determine if they believe a protection plan is necessary

Detailed timeline with specific activities

Below is a timeline of the specific activities that should be done to complete the above actions. These actions will take place over a six-year period. Some actions will need to be done over multiple years.

Timeline	Specific Activity	Action Name	EPA Assistance Needed	Partner Assistance
Year 1	Staff attend wetland delineation training	MA-1	Delineation Training (Or outside Company)	None
	Staff attend wetland monitoring training	MA-1	Monitoring Training (Or outside Company)	None
Year 2	Create QAPP for delineation	MA-2	Example QAPP	Tribal Council Approval
	Create QAPP for Monitoring	MA-3	Example QAPP	Tribal Council Approval

Timeline	Specific Activity	Action Name	EPA Assistance Needed	Partner Assistance
Year 3	Once trained delineate wetlands on parcels that have not been surveyed yet	MA-2	None	None
	Create map combining new data with data that the Tribe has already so that all water resources are identifies and delineated.	MA-2	None	None
	Monitor wetlands following monitoring plan	MA-3	None	None
	Work with facilities staff so that they know where wetlands are and to avoid if possible	VRP-1	None	Chicken Ranch Faculties Department
	Give presentation to Council on Wetlands	VRP-1	Feedback From EPA	Tribal Council
	Give presentation to Chicken Ranch Economic Development Corp on wetlands	VRP-1	Feedback From EPA	Chicken Ranch Economic Development Corp
	Put wetland article in Tribal Newsletter	VRP-1	Feedback From EPA	None
Year 4	Continue to delineate wetlands on parcels that have not been surveyed yet	MA-2	None	None
	Update map as new wetland data is created	MA-2	None	None
	Continue to monitor wetlands following monitoring plan	MA-3	None	None
	Give new presentation to Council on Wetlands	VRP-1	Feedback From EPA	Tribal Council
	Give new presentation to Chicken Ranch Economic Development Corp on wetlands	VRP-1	Feedback From EPA	Chicken Ranch Economic Development Corp
	Put new wetland article in Tribal Newsletter	VRP-1	Feedback From EPA	None
	Establish "Baseline" for wetlands in order to compare to post development	MA-3	Training on how to utilize data to create a baseline or example of	None

Timeline	Specific Activity	Action Name	EPA Assistance Needed	Partner Assistance
			how other Tribes have done this	
Year 5	Monitor wetlands following monitoring plan	MA-3	None	None
	If needed update QAPP for long-term monitoring	MA-4	None	Tribal Council Approval
	Give new presentation to Council on Wetlands	VRP-1	Feedback From EPA	Tribal Council
	Give new presentation to Chicken Ranch Economic Development Corp on wetlands	VRP-1	Feedback From EPA	Chicken Ranch Economic Development Corp
	Put new wetland article in Tribal Newsletter	VRP-1	Feedback From EPA	None
	Determine if wetlands on tribal lands are under the jurisdiction of the Federal, State or Tribal government	RA-1	Resources for EPA	None
	Use monitoring data to determine the overall health of all known wetlands	VRP-2	Help from EPA for overall summarization of data	None
	Write health report on wetlands	VRP-2	Feedback From EPA	None
Year 6	Monitor wetlands following monitoring plan	MA-3	None	None
	Begin long term monitoring based on past results	MA-4	None	None
	Give new presentation to Council on Wetlands	VRP-1	Feedback From EPA	Tribal Council
	Give new presentation to Chicken Ranch Economic Development Corp on wetlands	VRP-1	Feedback From EPA	Chicken Ranch Economic Development Corp
	Put new wetland article in Tribal Newsletter	VRP-1	Feedback From EPA	None
	Research and understand CWA 401 regulations	RA-1	Resources for EPA	None

Timeline	Specific Activity	Action Name	EPA Assistance Needed	Partner Assistance
	Research and understand CWA 404 regulations	RA-1	Resources for EPA	None
	Write recommendation report for wetlands that should be protected	VRP-2	Resources for EPA	None
	Present health report and recommendation report to council to determine if a protection plan is necessary	VRP-3	Feedback From EPA	Tribal Council, Chicken Ranch Economic Development Corp
	Update Wetland Program Plan	MA-3, MA-4, RA-1, VRP-1, VPR-2	Feedback From EPA	Tribal Council Approval

Conclusion

This document is Chicken Ranch Rancheria's first Wetland Program Plan, so most of the Wetland Program Plan will involve starting the Wetland Program. The focus over the next 6 years will be setting up the Wetland Program and understanding wetlands locations, health and regulations.