

RYER ISLAND FLOOD HISTORY & POSITION STATEMENT

As of 2009, DWR and other California agencies are publishing “final” reports regarding Delta levee stability, susceptibility to flooding, seismic risk and monetary valuation based on a formula of these various data findings. 2009 and 2008 reports claim that Ryer Island has flooded 3 times, in 1904, 1907 and 1986. However, the reporting agencies know, or should have known, they are wrong based on a review of their own records. The number of times Ryer Island has flooded is a material factor in several formula calculations which purport to determine future seismic and flood vulnerability for Ryer Island, which in turn is used as a factor when determining the island’s worth for ongoing maintenance and existing uses. Consider these facts:

1986 Flood:

2008/2009 BDCP/DWR/DRMS maps, charts and reports say Ryer Island flooded in 1986, which is contrary to previous governmental agency reports and studies:

A. CALFED Technical Report Affected Environment. Supplement to Flood Control, dated March 1998: provides a comprehensive list of Delta Islands and flood years. Does NOT list 1986 for Ryer Island.

B. Assembly Committee on Water, Parks & Wildlife, undated, but covers flood history through 1997. Slide show lists all Delta flood years and islands that flooded those years. Year 1986 Ryer Island does NOT show as flooded.

C. USACE, Sacramento District, March 1999 map labeled “Detailed view of Flooding Extent 1986. Ryer Island does NOT show as flooded, but marks on the map indicate an area water (not classified as flooding) based on a provided photograph that makes no sense based on the map associated.

D. June 1995 Sacramento Historical Society report of the history of Ryer Island. Known flooding to date is detailed. Speaker does NOT mention any flooding in 1986 on Ryer Island.

E. Solano County chronological history of major county disasters and events. Covers 1986 flooding of Rio Vista area and other Delta Islands, but does not indicate Ryer Island flooded.

F. 2006 Maps produced by a group of students during the summer program “Reinvisioning the Delta” is the first time I find a report showing Ryer Island purportedly flooded in 1986. However, the student’s report does not give a data source. (This report summary is from memory, hard copy not available at this time)

1904 and 1907 Floods of Ryer Island.

Several historical documents and reports indicate Ryer Island flooded in 1904 and again in 1907. However, the island was not even reclaimed to its current configuration and levee system until much later, between 1911 and 1933, according to various historical documents. It is therefore inappropriate to downgrade an island as flooding when the island was not even improved to protect from flooding at those particular times.

For example, the DWR May 1975 “Plan for Improvement of the Delta Levees” provides maps and data for “Delta Islands Flooded Since 1930”. The report does not count earlier flood history because the levees were not yet built to protect the islands from flooding. From 1930 to the date of the report, Ryer Island had no floods. The same report gives an estimate of frequency of levee overtopping under then-present conditions (1975) and Ryer Island shows no history of overtopping.

Given the above information, the current reports by BDCP/DWR/DRMS regarding historical Ryer Island should read “0” instead of “3”. All calculations, assumptions, assessments and proposals as they pertain to Ryer Island should be revised to reflect the correct historical information.