

Delta Counties' Water Summit

California Needs a Fresh Start for its Water Future,
Not the Delta Tunnel

June 24, 2022



Delta Counties Coalition

Contra Costa County - Sacramento County - San Joaquin County - Solano County - Yolo County

"Working together on water and Delta issues"



DELTA COUNTIES' WATER SUMMIT

Friday, June 24, 2022

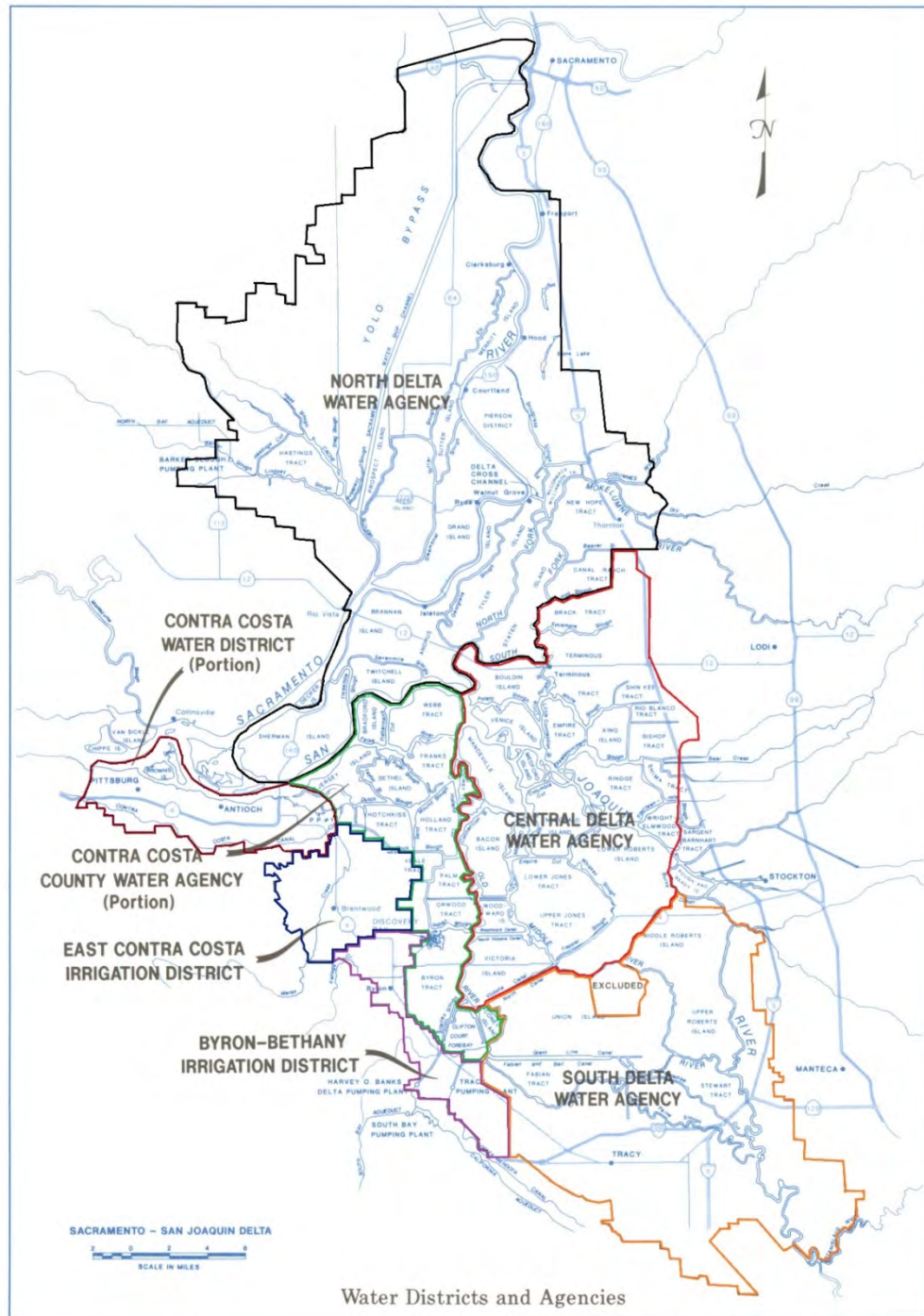
Agenda

9 a.m.–11 a.m.

Sacramento County Board Chambers

- **Welcome and opening remarks** (Supervisor Don Nottoli)
- **Environmental Justice Considerations** (Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla, Restore the Delta)
- **Tunnel Overview** (Ryan Hernandez, Kelly Taber)
- **Tunnel Impacts:**
 - (1) Economy (Dr. Jeff Michael)
 - (2) Recreation (Lenora Clark)
 - (3) Agriculture (Farmer Russ Van Loben Sels)
 - (4) Water Quality (John Herrick)
- **Alternatives** (DCC Supervisors)
- **Call to Action**

Map: Water Districts and Agencies in the Delta



Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Atlas

Department of Water Resources

Revised 7/95

Map Adapted from The Delta Atlas.

Delta Counties Coalition

The Delta Counties Coalition (DCC)

The DCC is an alliance of the California Counties of Contra Costa, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Solano and Yolo. They work collaboratively to give one voice to the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta (Delta) and its 4 million area-wide residents and advocate to achieve three goals: improve the Delta ecosystem, provide a more reliable water supply for the State, and protect and enhance Delta communities. The DCC stands ready to work with federal agencies, congressional members and others to develop and implement solutions that address Delta issues in a comprehensive, sustainable manner.

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Facts at a Glance

The Delta is a vibrant ecosystem which supports diverse fish and wildlife species, robust agriculture, maritime commerce, and passionate recreational enthusiasts.

- It is the most extensive inland delta in the world and the largest estuary on the Pacific Coast of the Americas.
- It provides water to over 25 million people in the State and irrigation for 750,000 acres of agricultural lands.
- It is home to nearly 4 million Delta County residents, including 2,500 farmers that contribute \$2 billion to California's economy each year.
- It supplies water to over 500,000 acres of California prime farmland, which is the Delta's dominant land use composing 75% of the region's landscape.
- Its rich physical and chemical characteristics and reliable irrigation make Delta agriculture's per acre yields almost 50% higher than the State's average.
- It provides habitat for more than 500 species of plants and wildlife, including dozens of endangered species.
- It supports the largest nursery for CA fisheries and the largest Pacific Coast fly over stop for migrating waterfowl.
- It has approximately 60 islands that are protected by 1,100 miles of levees.
- It offers recreational opportunities to the two million Californians that visit the Delta each year for boating, fishing, hunting and viewing wildlife.



The DCC advocates for a statewide water solution that includes: Water system operation improvements/conveyance, regional self-reliance, levee improvements, storage, and restoring the Delta.

Delta Counties Coalition Principles

The Delta Counties Coalition, a consortium of five Delta Counties, including Contra Costa, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Solano, and Yolo, is working to give one voice to the Delta, advocating on behalf of local government and the 4 million people throughout the Delta region. These principles describe the Delta Counties' joint interests in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta and Greater Bay Delta Estuary.

The Delta Counties Coalition believes that the management of the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta and greater Bay Delta Estuary must:

1. Protect and improve water quality and water quantity in the Delta region and maintain appropriate Delta outflow for a healthy estuary;
2. Protect the existing water right priority system and legislative protections established for the Delta;
3. Respect and safeguard Delta Counties' responsibilities related to land use, water resources, flood management, tax revenues, public health and safety, economic development, agricultural stability, recreation, and environmental protection in any projects, policies, or operations;
4. Represent and include local government in any governance structures for the Delta;
5. Protect, enhance, and preserve the Delta's agricultural economic viability, the ongoing vitality of its communities, and its historical significance;
6. Support rehabilitation, improvement, and maintenance of levees throughout the Delta;
7. Support the Delta pool concept, in which the common resource provides quality freshwater supply to all Delta users, requiring mutual responsibility to maintain, restore, and protect the common resource;
8. Support immediate improvements to through-Delta conveyance;
9. Require that any water conveyance plan for the Delta is aligned with these principles and supported by clearly demonstrated improvement to the entire state's water management;
10. Protect and restore the Delta ecosystem and provide for a healthy estuary in perpetuity by ensuring adequate water supply and quality, enhancing Delta fisheries, and managing or eradicating invasive species;
11. Include the study and implementation of storage options, sustainable groundwater management and conjunctive use, conservation, recycling, reuse, and regional self-sufficiency as part of an improved statewide flood management and water supply system, which will reduce reliance on the Delta as called for in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Reform Act of 2009;
12. Support conservation actions aligned with these principles and the habitat plans and programs of each Delta County.



Delta Counties Coalition

Contra Costa County · Sacramento County · San Joaquin County · Solano County · Yolo County
"Working together on water and Delta issues"

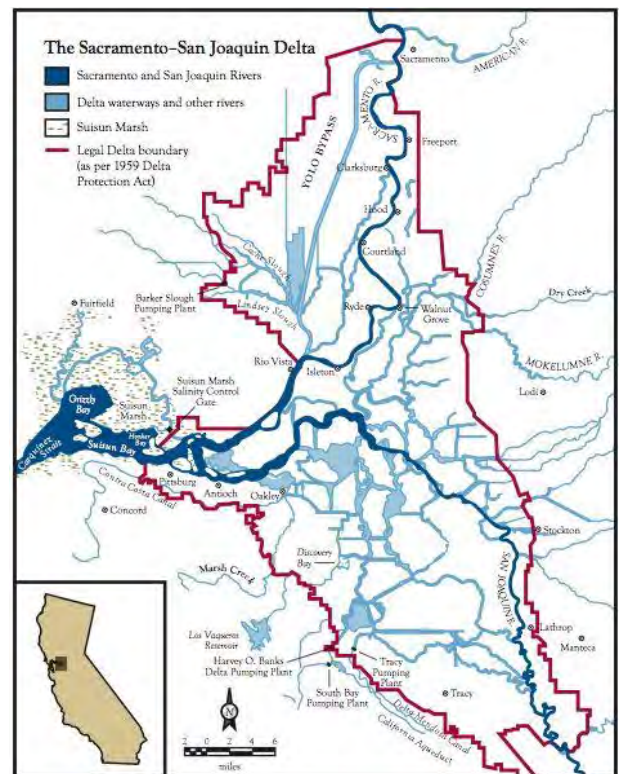
2022 Delta Counties Coalition (DCC) Priorities

Who is the DCC? The DCC is a consortium of five Delta Counties, including Contra Costa, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Solano, and Yolo, that work collaboratively to give one voice to the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta System (Delta) and its 4 million area-wide residents. The DCC advocates to achieve three goals: (1) protect and enhance Delta communities, (2) improve water quality and the Delta ecosystem, and (3) provide a more reliable water supply for the State.

Delta First - The DCC is committed to improving the health of the Delta ecosystem while preserving and enhancing the unique agricultural, historical, cultural, environmental values of the Delta and, concurrently, increasing the reliability of the state's water supply. This Delta-First approach advocates for improving our existing water infrastructure, which does not require a new Delta Tunnel (a.k.a. "isolated conveyance").

Support a Resilient Water Supply

Regional Self-Sufficiency – Sustainable approaches to reduce reliance on the Delta through the development of "new" water supplies and less reliance on Delta water exports ultimately improves in-Delta water conditions. New water supplies include wastewater reuse, development of surface and groundwater storage, and more effective coordination of flood control and water supply systems to help preserve and improve both water supply and water quality. Stormwater capture, water purification, desalination, reuse and recycling,



Why the Delta "Tunnel" is Wrong for California:

- Creates No New Water
- Doesn't Help in Droughts
- Harms Delta Communities and the Environment
- High Risk, High Cost Project
- Takes Resources Away from Other Water Infrastructure Needs

conservation, groundwater cleanup, and coordinated use of surface water and groundwater to maximize sufficient yield are cost-effective methods for generating new sources of water. In fact, there's as much new water available from these water supply sources as is currently exported from the Delta.

Protecting Vital Infrastructure – The DCC advocates with Federal and State leaders to help fund the public benefits of maintaining and improving the Delta levees that make the existing Federal and State water delivery system

possible. Delta levees protect over \$60 billion of critical statewide and regional infrastructure, including pipelines, highways and power and communication lines, along with the water supply delivery system, the lives and livelihoods of Delta residents, and the vital Delta agricultural sector.

Protect a Healthy Delta Ecosystem – In the face of climatic changes, the Delta ecosystem must be protected and restored as the Delta continues to serve as the state's water hub. Ensuring that adequate fresh water of good quality continues to flow through the Delta enhances Delta fisheries and helps manage/eradicate invasive species, while sustaining Delta communities.

Protecting a Healthy Delta Ecosystem for Economic Vitality - Well-designed habitat restoration projects that use existing public lands and incorporate Good Neighbor policies should be prioritized. Projects developed in collaboration with local communities that preserve working landscapes can provide multiple benefits for imperiled fisheries, while also providing recreational opportunities and public access for local residents as well as the Delta's many visitors.



Invasive Species Eradication and Commercial Abandoned & Derelict Vessel Removal - The DCC supports increased Federal and State funding and development of local programs to address harmful algal blooms and invasive species (e.g., nutria and aquatic weeds) and cleaning up abandoned vessels that threaten human health and delicate Delta ecosystems.

Ensure the Health and Sustainability of the Delta and its Communities – The DCC supports and encourages Delta-centric activities to protect and enhance the Delta as it exists today while honoring the rich history of the region. Through coordinated actions with local and State leaders, we support in-Delta preservation and economic sustainability, including development of the Delta National Heritage Area, agricultural sustainability, healthy soils, compatible ecosystem restoration, improved recreational access, and other actions to preserve and enhance the Delta and the vitality of its communities. We urge water stakeholders to reconsider the options to meet current and future statewide water needs and to select responsible and cost-effective options that protect the Delta's communities and the environment.



Visit www.sharedwatersolutions.com for more information.
Questions? Contact Natasha Drane at DraneN@SacCounty.Gov or 916-874-4627

Commercial Abandoned and Derelict Vessels



The following information is from the [Proceedings of the Workshop of State-Level Responses to Abandoned and Derelict Vessels](#) September 15-17, 2009

Background

ADV are consistently identified as problematic to state coastal managers, negatively impacting marine waterways and communities. While seaworthy vessels provide many services such as recreation and commerce, ADVs have numerous deleterious impacts—threat of oil or other pollutant spills, impediments to navigation, physical destruction of habitat, use as clandestine dump sites, nutrient enrichment, tourism reduction, and human health and safety hazards, to name a

few. Storm events can move or break up vessels, spreading the damage over a greater area and often increasing the cost of addressing them. Responsible ownership, maintenance, and operation are the norm for the boating community, but once a vessel becomes abandoned or derelict actions to mitigate the aforementioned potential impacts are necessary.

Part of the challenge in appropriately responding to ADVs is the sheer number of variables (e.g., ownership, jurisdiction, liability, appropriate legislation or regulations) possible per individual case. Some scenarios, such as if a vessel is leaking oil or if a vessel is located in a federally maintained navigation channel, are relatively clear in terms of responsibility and action required. However, there are significantly more scenarios with an unknown path to resolution. Who is responsible for responding to a derelict vessel not leaking oil or in a federally maintained navigation channel? What if a vessel owner cannot be identified? Who pays for removal and disposal? What if the vessel breaks apart, with a portion on land and a portion still in the water? Are there response differences between commercial and recreational vessels? A robust state ADV program, working in coordination with marinas, boat owners, nongovernmental organizations, and Federal and other state agencies, can help overcome these challenges.

During 2008 and 2009, media coverage of ADVs was substantial. Many stories cited the economic downturn in the United States as a contributing factor to an increase in the number of ADVs. The Abandoned and Derelict Vessel Workshop was designed in response to both this observation and the many requests the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Marine Debris Program (MDP) receives regarding ADVs in state waters. While awareness of the issue has been raised nationally, solutions and new ways of addressing ADVs have not been clearly articulated and adopted.

The workshop to address abandoned and derelict vessels was held September 14-17, 2009, in Miami, Florida, with the intention of bringing together Federal agency representatives and state coastal managers to facilitate discussion on ADVs and share challenges and successful practices. The workshop objectives were to:

- Share information on NOAA and other select Federal agencies' ADV interests and resources.
- Enhance communication between states that have ADV programs and those looking to build them.

Prior to the workshop, given the wide variety of expertise and experiences of participants, a questionnaire was distributed with each attendee's registration confirmation. Participants were asked to respond to two questions intended to guide the workshop discussion of ADV program components and challenges and provide a baseline of state-level involvement in the topic. The questions were:

- What are the two largest issues you face in terms of abandoned and derelict vessels? Please explain.
- What do you want to learn and what do you hope to take away by participating in the workshop?

Responses to the first question included challenges in identifying funding sources (70%), determining vessel ownership (30%), knowing the number of ADVs impacting the state (20%), and understanding Federal authorities (20%). Responses to the second question included an interest in strategies from states with an ADV program (65%), identifying funding sources (40%), increasing knowledge of relevant ADV legislation (20%), and strengthening state and Federal agency partnerships (20%).

Building upon these responses to initiate discussion, the workshop was designed to allow Federal agencies to share information with state representatives on their mandates and authorities, and for states that have adopted ADV abatement programs to share information about their successes and challenges. The workshop was additionally designed to go beyond simply sharing information in order to establish a network of individuals committed to learning from one another and working together. Articulating the roles of the Federal agencies present and the lessons learned from existing state ADV programs provided tools and suggestions for other state managers without a formal ADV program to emulate and apply in their own region.

Components of a Comprehensive ADV Program

Steps to build a comprehensive ADV program may include planning for program administration, enacting legislation, identifying funding sources, creating an ADV inventory, planning for the removal and disposal of ADVs, clarifying enforcement authority and abilities (directly or through other state agencies), developing prevention strategies, conducting outreach campaigns, and. It should be noted that successful ADV programs can exist without some, or even many, of these components. The following list is intended to serve as a guide for state managers developing an ADV program; it contains all of the components identified by the workshop participants.

- **Program Administration:** Identify the needed infrastructure for a successful program; develop a vision and strategy.
Outlining what the state's ADV program would look like from discovery to disposal is recommended, as is considering general program administration requirements.
- **Legislation:** Know the relevant legislation; pursue appropriate state legislation to formalize an ADV program.
*Know state statutes and key definitions (the Sea Grant Law Center State Abandoned Vessel Laws document is one tool) and investigate the **state's political climate as it relates to addressing ADVs and developing a state program to conduct the work.***
- **Funding:** Understand applicable funding sources and the true cost of all components of a program; strive for self-sustaining funding.
Funding, along with removal and disposal, was identified as a critical component of any state ADV program and requires strategic consideration and incorporation.

- **Inventory:** Create an ADV inventory to capture and track key information. *Knowing the magnitude of ADV challenges is critical to being able to propose appropriate solutions; an inventory need not be complicated or expensive. An inventory should include location, number, and accumulation rate of ADVs.*
- **Removal:** Weigh options for removal methods, which vary in cost, success, and ecological damage; understand those methods that will work best by vessel type and geographic location. *Removal, along with funding and disposal, was identified as a critical component of any state ADV program, and requires strategic consideration and incorporation.*
- **Disposal:** Proper disposal can be accomplished through several different means, each varying in cost and environmental impact. *Disposal, along with funding and removal, was identified as a critical component of any state ADV program, and requires strategic consideration and incorporation.*
- **Enforcement:** Active enforcement programs may deter irresponsible vessel ownership. *Cooperation is needed with enforcement officers to reduce existing numbers of ADVs, potentially recover costs for removal and disposal, and reduce the number of ADVs intentionally created.*
- **Prevention:** Avoiding, to the greatest extent possible, vessels becoming abandoned and derelict can save money and prevent the natural resource and navigation threats and should be the goal of any ADV program. *Some ADVs are created intentionally and others are the result of storms or other indirect causes. Consider how laws, training, and outreach can be implemented to reach the most appropriate audiences and prevent ADV introduction.*
- **Outreach:** Engage necessary and interested constituents and partners to address ADVs. *An effective outreach campaign need not be expensive or time-consuming, particularly with the explosion of social media outlets. Increasing awareness of the challenges may reveal unknown solutions. Develop, strengthen, or reinvigorate a working relationship with relevant Federal and state agencies. Determine what other state agencies have an interest, responsibility, or are impacted by ADVs. Explore partnerships with enforcement agencies targeted toward ADV issues.*

US Government Accountability Office, March 2017, Federal and State Actions, Expenditures, and Challenges to Addressing Abandoned and Derelict Vessels

<https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-17-202.pdf>

Figure 2: Circumstances in which Federal Agencies Generally Respond to Abandoned and Derelict Vessel (ADV)-related Incidents in U.S. Waterways as Federal On-Scene Coordinators or Fund ADV-removal



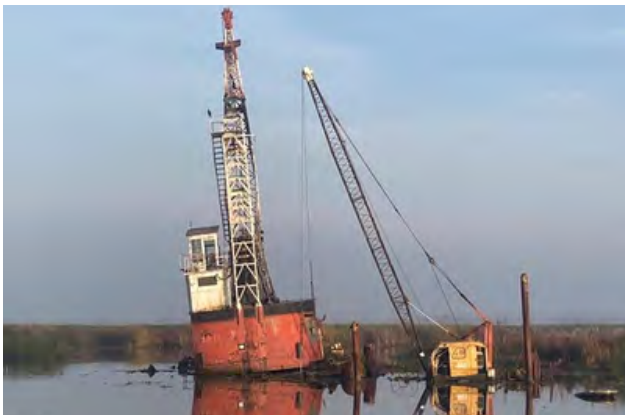
Source: GAO analysis of federal agency documentation. | GAO-17-202

Note: The vessel owner, lessee, or operator (responsible party) has primary responsibility for removal of the hazard to navigation or cleanup of an oil or hazardous material discharge or release. If the responsible party fails to take action or cannot be identified, the appropriate agency may proceed with removal of the hazard.

SB 1065: Commercial Abandoned and Derelict Vessel Program

What is SB 1065?

SB 1065 will help keep our waterways clean, safe, and address the harm that commercial abandoned and derelict vessels (CADV) cause by creating a statewide program to fund the inventory, removal, and destruction of these vessels, as well as a Coordinating Council of federal, state and local agencies to provide program oversight and coordination of removal efforts.



Why is SB 1065 necessary?

Unlike recreational vessels, such as ski, fishing and houseboats, a statewide program does not exist to fund the removal and destruction of CADVs. State and local agencies have to rely on cooperation by vessel owners, lengthy legal approaches and limited federal actions.

The limitations and disjointed federal, state and local authorities and responsibilities coupled with no ongoing funding is a significant impediment to addressing this problem.



If passed, what will SB 1065 do?

California will be a national leader on removing CADV hazards. SB 1065 will reduce the pollution, navigation, and health threats of CADVs by funding their removal and destruction, and providing operational support and policy guidance to make real progress toward cleaning up California's waterways.

What are CADVs?

Former WWII era and other military craft, derrick barges, tugboats and other commercial vessels strewn throughout the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and other California waterways are broken down, rusted out, sinking, sunk or at risk of sinking, creating pollution and navigation hazards.

CADVs contain hazardous materials that leach into the water creating environmental and health dangers including:

- Petroleum products
- Solvents
- Asbestos-containing materials
- PCBs
- Copper and lead based paints
- Batteries

Invasive Aquatic Weeds in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta

Sacramento–San Joaquin River Delta of northern California is the largest freshwater estuary on the western coast of the United States. The Delta provides irrigation water for over \$30 billion in crops in the Delta and Central Valley and drinking water for 27 million people, supports \$300 million in recreational boating, and includes the ports of West Sacramento and Stockton. The Delta's sloughs, wetlands and riparian habitats host 56 threatened or endangered species. Invasions by nonnative aquatic weeds constitute a major environmental challenge. Invasive aquatic vegetation incurs billions of dollars in direct control costs and lost economic opportunity while causing significant environmental damage and adversely affecting water use. Aquatic invasive plants have no known natural controls. Continued warm temperatures help the plants grow at high rates. Plants are also known to form dense mats of vegetation creating safety hazards for boaters, obstructing navigation channels, marinas and irrigation systems.

- **Invasive aquatic weeds – such as submerged Brazilian waterweed, floating water hyacinth, and emergent giant reed – are some of the most prolific and damaging invasive plants in the Delta, which threaten our environment and economy.**

Floating and submerged aquatic weeds alter water velocity causing degradation of water quality and quantity including reduced dissolved oxygen, increased temperature and sedimentation, displace native plants, and reduce habitat for native fish and other animal species. Major impacts



on human activities include impairment of water conveyance and diversions and damage to infrastructure, obstruct navigation resulting in loss of access to water for boating, commercial shipping and transportation, and increases in disease-vectoring organisms such as

mosquitos contributing to concerns of the potential for increased incidents of West Nile Virus and Zika Virus.

- **Past solutions were ineffective.** Local control measures are limited to mechanical removal of aquatic weeds, which is labor intensive, costly, and only effective in relatively small critical areas. Spraying can be effective, but the size and scope of the problem is too large for the Department of Boating and Waterways to handle given the immediate relief needed from these weeds and the regulatory backlog. Additionally, as large mats of aquatic weeds decay post-spraying, dissolved oxygen in the water column can potentially become depleted, which is harmful for fish. Biological Opinions from USFWS and NMFS were granted annually for herbicide use for each aquatic weed species and restricted seasonal applications. These restrictions have reduced the overall effectiveness of herbicide usage needed to maintain aquatic weed control.

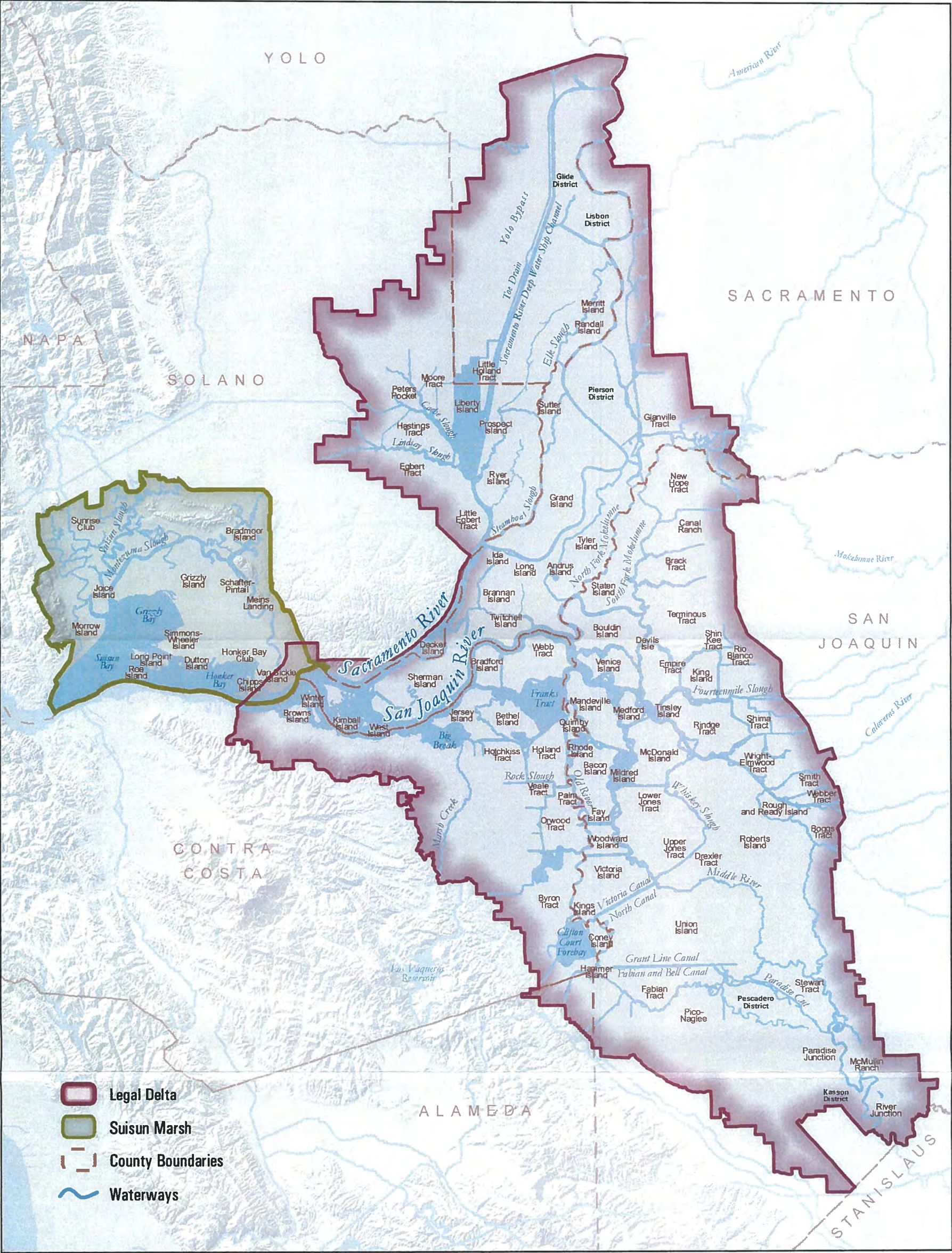


- **Beginning in 2014, USDA spearheaded a comprehensive and sustainable invasive weeds strategy for the Delta.** The Delta Region Areawide Aquatic Weed Project (DRAAWP) was funded from 2014 to 2018 to improve control of floating water hyacinth [*Eichhornia crassipes* (Mart.) Solms], submersed Brazilian waterweed (*Egeria densa* Planch.), and riparian arundo (*Arundo donax* L.) in the Delta. Outputs from the DRAAWP are now informing control of nine aquatic weeds

and arundo using adaptive, integrated chemical, mechanical, and biological approaches and all available tools, including herbicides, mechanical control, and biological control with insects. Satellite-based remote sensing and new knowledge on aquatic weed growth, dispersal, and environmental and economic impacts in the Delta are being used to inform decision-support tools to prioritize control sites and select optimal combinations of control methods at each site. Modeling and monitoring of control outcomes (i.e. the effect of healthy weeds in relation to sprayed weeds on dissolved oxygen) is a critical component of this effort to restore habitats with beneficial plant species to limit weed reinvasion.

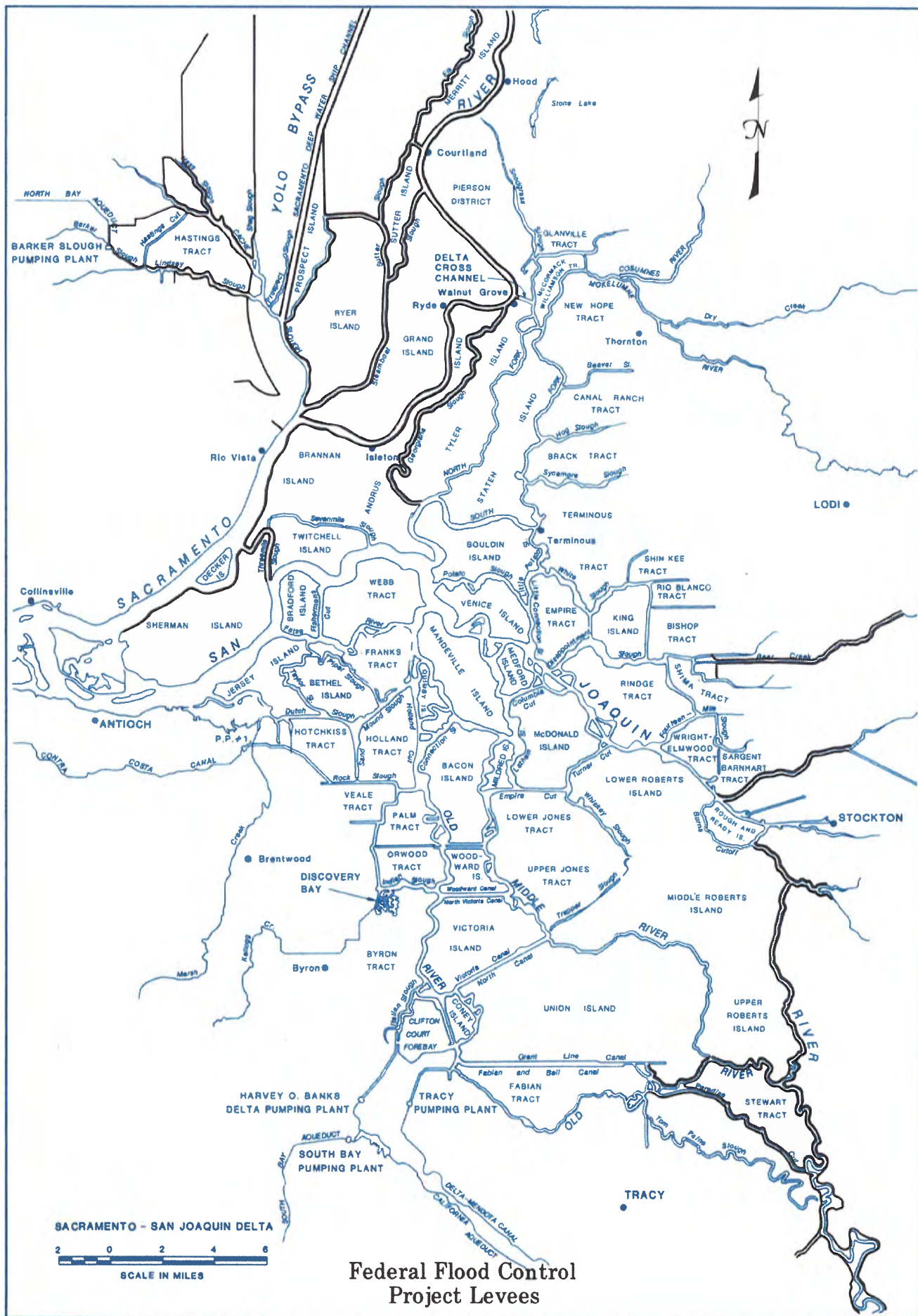


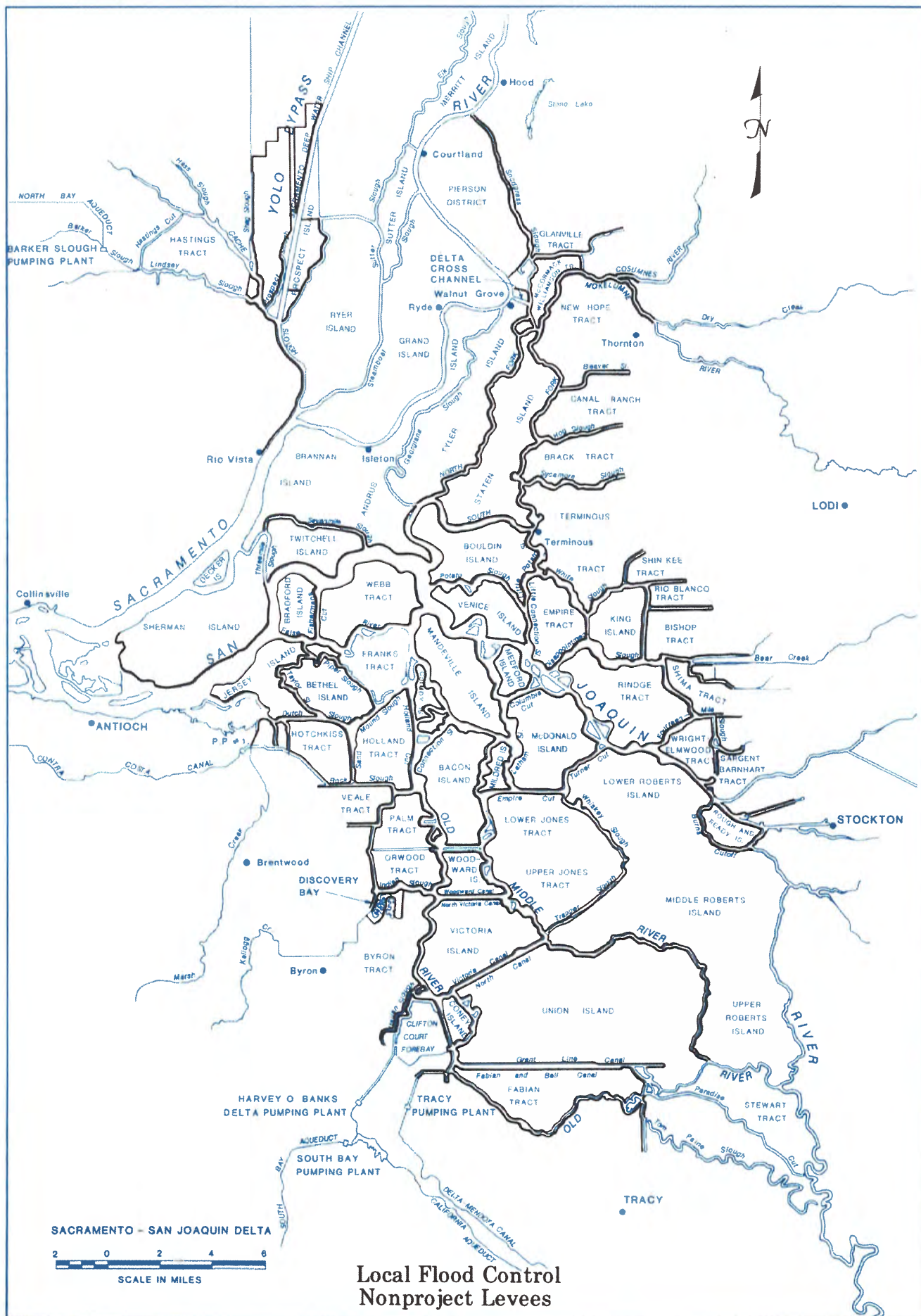
- **More remains to be done.** Successful control of aquatic weeds in these ecosystems requires integration of financial and logistical support, in-depth knowledge of weed invasions and impacts, and a range of control tools extending beyond the capacity of one agency or organization. This calls for adoption of integrated management tools and strategies to substantially reduce weed populations while also reducing herbicide use. Improved water availability and quality resulting from improved aquatic weed control is expected to increase habitat suitability. Funding for the Division of Boating and Waterway's Aquatic Invasive Plant Control Program comes from the Harbors and Watercraft Revolving Fund, which receives revenues from boaters' registration fees and gasoline taxes. Additional funding will be needed in FY2022/23 and beyond to continue this important work. Without the continued investment, the prior investments will have been wasted and the promising progress will halt.
- **Federal Support.** Section 104 of the River and Harbor Act of 1958, as amended (33 U.S.C. §610), authorizes the Aquatic Plant Control Program, a program for the prevention, control, and progressive eradication of noxious aquatic plant growths and aquatic invasive species in U.S. waters. The USACE generally undertakes efforts to prevent or reduce the introduction and establishment of invasive species at its projects, pursuant to its nationwide invasive species policy, engineering regulations, and project and programmatic authorizations (some of which authorize specific invasive species control and eradication activities). USACE typically funds invasive species work for individual projects through the Operation and Maintenance (O&M) account; project planning documents address the nature of work at the project level. USACE also pursues invasive species research that may involve field studies at USACE projects. For FY2021, Congress appropriated \$25 million for the Aquatic Plant Control Program. The WRDA act of 2020 included provisions related to USACE invasive species efforts and called for periodic updates on invasive species policy and provided annual authorizations to \$50M from FY2021 through FY2024. However, these appropriations are to be shared nationwide in regions. We would also ask that the Delta be added to the list of locales authorized by Sections 129 and 501 of WRDA 2020 as those where the Corps may consider invasive species-specific efforts and provide updates on invasive species policy for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.



The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and Suisun Marsh, Figure 1-1

DP 370





Delta Infrastructure: Transportation Corridors & Levees/Flood Control

Strengthening Delta levees is vitally important to safeguarding the lives and livelihoods of four million Delta Counties residents. According to a report prepared for the Department of Water Resources, delta levees protect over \$60 billion of critical infrastructure. This infrastructure supports a vital Delta County agricultural industry that contributes more than \$4 billion to the State's economy each year as well as boosting a Northern California mega-region economy with an [\\$875 billion](#) annual gross regional product. This infrastructure also benefits 27 million Californians south of the Delta, who rely in part on water from the Delta for their water supply.

Delta levees benefit a full range of users ("beneficiaries"). In addition to protecting property from flooding, Delta levees form the backbone of the regional road system, ensure the continued existence of Delta towns and communities, and protect habitat for wildlife, including threatened and endangered species. They form a network of channels that entice boaters to explore the inner reaches of the Delta and support a longstanding tradition of hunting and fishing. And they carry fresh water to the pumps that supply water to the farmers of the San Joaquin Valley and to residents of the Bay Area and southern California. They also bear stress from these users, including damage from ship and boat wake, and increased flood flows from upstream communities, water level drawdown from export pumping, scour and sedimentation, and storm water runoff.

Infrastructure components provided by the delta levees continue to play a vitally important part by providing the necessary access and movement of goods throughout the area, agricultural support services, and recreational opportunities while also protecting the remaining features from deadly flooding and salinity intrusion. The Delta Counties advocate supporting the retention and improvement of levee infrastructure components so vital to a properly functioning Delta, not only because of the benefits it provides to the Delta counties, but for statewide priorities (water transfers) these protect. Two areas of infrastructure improvements should be pursued; Transportation Corridors and Levees/Flood Control/Storage.

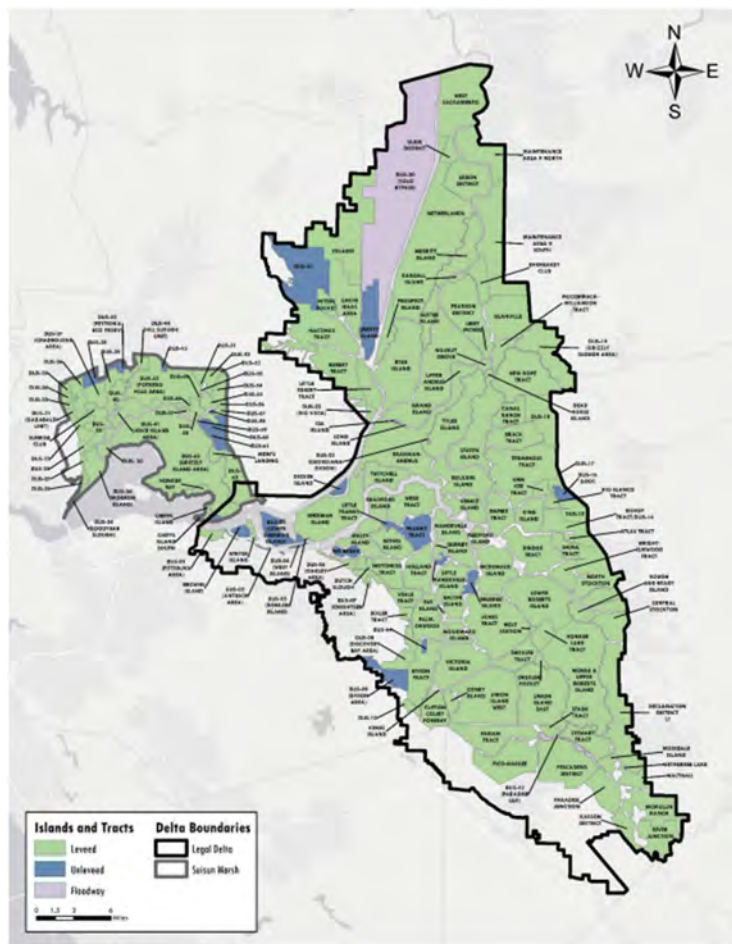
Transportation Corridors

Roads, highways, and shipping channels are vital to inter-county mobility, public safety, a healthy business climate, recreation, and agricultural vitality throughout the delta region. The major state highways in the Delta (SR 4, SR 12, SR 84, SR 160, and SR 220) are typically two lanes, sometimes built on top of levees. Originally meant for lower traffic volumes at moderate speeds, the state highways are now heavily used for regional trucking, recreational access, and commuting. Highway 12 is a prime example of a transportation corridor that supports commerce, emergency response, and circulation in Solano County, but also transects the Delta. Ensuring these three routes are operational is not only important for economics and emergency preparedness, but also for the military readiness since Travis Air Force Base, located in Solano County, is vital to this area. By having adequate interconnectivity on adjacent transportation corridors, Travis can be maximized for military and humanitarian efforts when needed. Many of the secondary delta roads are built on top of the delta levee system. Two auto ferries in the Delta allow public access. There are more than 50 bridges, including approximately 30 drawbridges, spanning the navigable channels in the Delta. Bridges impact vessel traffic on the waterways; some bridges rarely open requiring boats to travel alternate waterways. Some bridges open regularly, impacting surface traffic and creating possible delays in emergency response.

Levees/Flood Control/Storage

The Sacramento region is generally acknowledged as having the highest flood risk in the nation due to the Central Valley's land elevation requiring thousands of miles of levees to protect lives, property, and the environment. Roughly 1,115 miles of levees protect farms, businesses, cities, schools, people, water quality, and a unique ecosystem of national significance in and around the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The Delta also is a crucial component of California's overall water supply system for 24 million people.

Delta levees provide create the freshwater pathway to allow water from state and federal reservoirs incoming rivers to flow to the state and federal Central Valley Project and State Water Project water export pumps located in the south Delta. Many Delta levees, however, are vulnerable in need of improvement and all require constant maintenance to reduce and keep pace with flood risks. Strengthening these vulnerable levees not only protects people, property, and public infrastructure, but also habitat and open space.



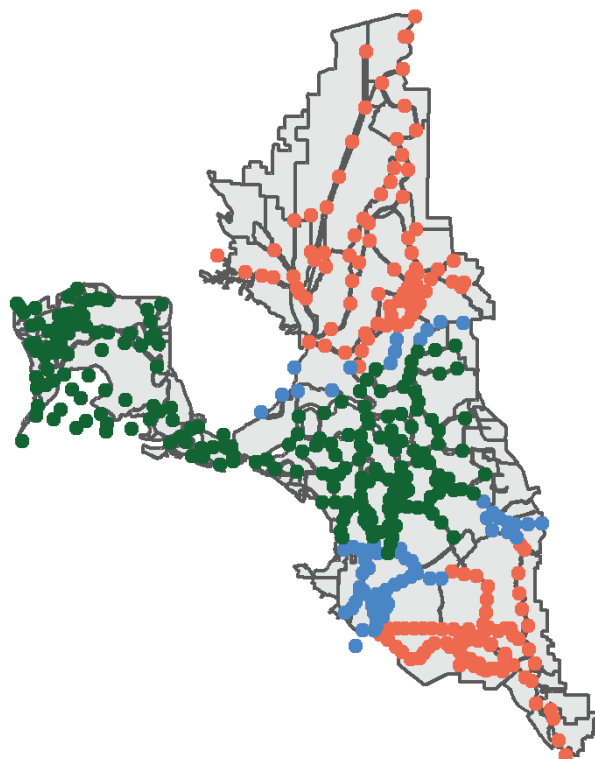
SOURCE: Arcadis, 2017b.

Levee Funding: The state and local partner investment program in Delta levees has been successful. and have contributed to significant reduction in flood risk overall. With an average \$22 million per year investment since the 1980s, there has been a 50 percent reduction in levee failures. For about \$1 billion (spent over 10-15 years), Delta levees could be improved to the baseline Bulletin 192-82 standard with a 24-foot wide crown to further safeguard against potential earthquakes and sea level rise.

For project levees (federally authorized projects within the State Plan of Flood Control (SPFC), for which the State is the local sponsor), some funding comes from the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), with state cost-sharing requirements. However, the USACE recently found that structural flood risk management projects throughout much of the Delta were not economically justified. This, combined with increasing federal restrictions in a post-Hurricane Katrina environment, creates uncertainty about future federal funding for levee improvements.

Significant risks remain, however, despite the commitment of State and local resources, especially as we face rising sea levels under climate change. Authorization of an environmental infrastructure program in WRDA 2022 for the five Delta counties could be utilized for important flood control projects in the counties, including repair and improvement to nonfederal Delta levees.

Adaptation to climate change should focus on the source of vulnerability



Influence

- Riverine
- Transition
- SLR

Vulnerable Populations

Social vulnerability index (comprised of 14 indicators):

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| ■ Young children | ■ Tenancy |
| ■ Older adults living alone | ■ Vehicle access |
| ■ Ability status | ■ Access to health insurance |
| ■ Educational attainment | ■ Asthma rate |
| ■ Linguistic isolation | ■ Cardiovascular rate |
| ■ Poverty status | ■ Low birth weight rate |
| ■ Race and ethnicity | ■ Food security |

Other vulnerable populations:

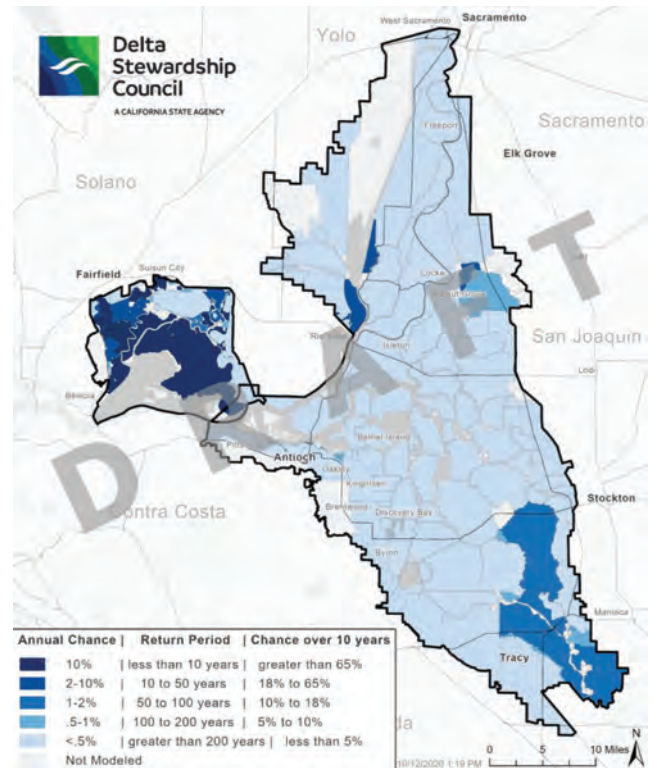
- Outdoor workers
- Incarcerated populations
- Institutionalized populations
- People experiencing homelessness
- People living in mobile homes



Current Conditions

10% of the Delta exposed during a 100-year flood

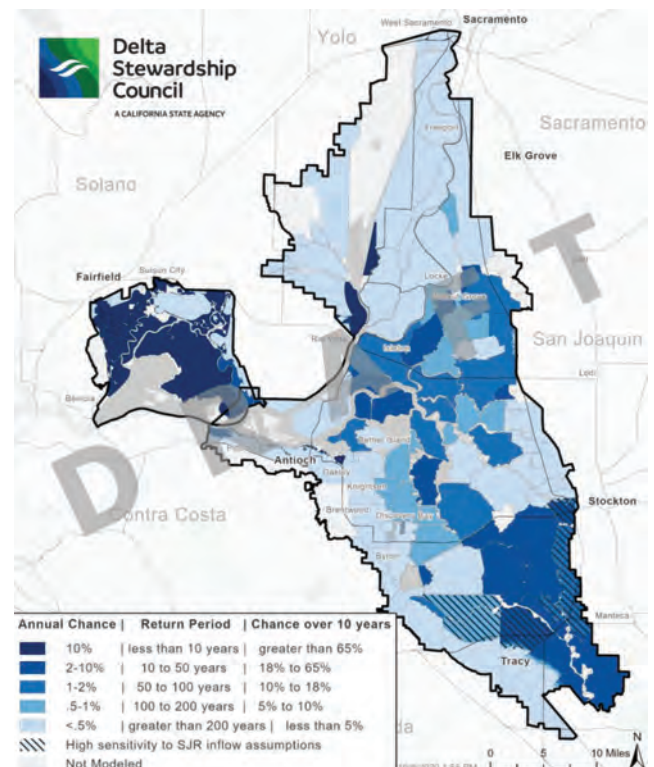
2% of Delta population exposed during a 100-year flood



2050 Conditions

35% of the Delta exposed during a 100-year flood

Over 10% of Delta population (**65,000 people**) exposed during a 100-year flood, including over **11,000** people living in communities with highest social vulnerability



About the Survey

The survey was designed in MetroQuest (www.metroquest.com). It was designed to be highly interactive and engaging, ask many questions in a short amount of time, and to perform equally well on computers, smartphones, and tablets. The survey was made available in English, Spanish, and Chinese. A hotline was provided to respond to inquiries and provide assistance as needed, such as for those who do not have access to or comfort with digital devices. A demonstration of the survey can be found [here](http://demo.metroquestsurvey.com/fc5r5w) (<http://demo.metroquestsurvey.com/fc5r5w>).

The survey invited participants to provide information about their priorities, favorite aspects and concerns about the Delta, economic wellbeing, experiences in nature, and project opinions. It also contained a mapping exercise that enabled participants to share the locations of the places that matter most to them as well as to share their thoughts about these places, how they interact with them, and more. The survey contained quantitative questions – such as multiple choice, ranking, checkboxes, etc. – that allowed participants to make choices among the available options. It also included many open-ended questions and other opportunities to provide input in their own words.

The survey was organized into five sections, each of which were tied to the following screens.

- **Screen 1: Welcome and Overview**
This screen describes the purpose, goal, and potential timeline of the proposed Delta Conveyance Project.
- **Screen 2: Priorities: What's important to you?**
This screen provides respondents an opportunity to rank six of twelve different possible priorities, in response to the question, "What is most important to you for maintaining or improving the quality of your life in the Delta? ," with an option to suggest another priority and provide comment.
- **Screen 3: Special Places: Places that matter to you**
This screen was an opportunity to drag markers onto a map-based survey. This screen was intended to help the state investigate potential impacts and understand more about historic and cultural sites, fishing, gathering spots, outdoor activities, businesses or services, or other special places in the statutory Delta.
- **Screen 4: Delta Community Needs**
This screen included four sub-screens of multiple choice and open-ended questions about what respondents like best and have concerns about the Delta region; economic wellbeing and identifying social services; experience in nature, including frequent activities and what would make respondents spend more time visiting Delta waterways or natural areas; and the respondents' opinion about the project, including concerns about its effects as well as inquiring about potential benefits.
- **Screen 5: Demographics**
This screen included multiple choice questions about ethnicity, language, zip code, income, and how the respondent learned about the Delta Conveyance project. This information was used during the survey outreach effort to target outreach and to analyze the survey afterwards.

Survey Highlights

Following are global highlights from the survey.

1. People who live in the Delta region recreate, fish, and travel to visit friends, restaurants, and other towns by boat. Day-to-day life happens on the water, and the Delta's waterways are central to the region's identity.

Many Delta-region DAC participants indicated that they routinely gather and recreate on the water as well as travel via the water. In fact, of the outdoor activity sites participants added to the Special Places map, most were places where they participated in water activities. In addition, when participants placed gathering spots and businesses on the map, one of the most common types was restaurants located at marinas.

2. Fishing in the Delta is a way of life. For 90% of the fishing locations respondents identified, they indicated that they eat fish from the Delta four or more times per week.

After outdoor activity sites, the second most frequently chosen sites were locations where participants fish. At 90% of the fishing locations identified by Delta-region DAC respondents, the respondent indicated that they or their family eat fish from the Delta four or more times per week. For almost half (47%) of the fishing spots identified, the respondent indicated fishing throughout the year. In comments there was a strong desire for "fishing to continue," and many spoke about how fishing is "a way of life."

3. Throughout the survey, participants consistently expressed interest in the natural environment; clean air and drinking water; maintenance of flows and water quality in the Delta waterways; and healthy habitat for fish, migrating birds; and other wildlife.

Survey responses also mentioned water quality concerns related to diversion of Delta water flows, harmful algal blooms or invasive species, trash, and pollution. Participants felt these issues impacted the continued health of the Delta, and the local community, economy, agriculture and recreation.

4. There is a strong desire to preserve the Delta and the communities that make up the Delta.

There is concern that construction impact would alter the way of life in the Delta, as well as present risks to important places in the Delta, including historic sites such as Locke, historic homes, fishing sites, businesses, and other places. The town of Locke was by far the most identified historic site in the "Special Places" mapping section. Many respondents drew a connection between preserving regional agriculture – including multi-generational farms – and preserving the history of the Delta and its community.

5. The majority of Delta-region DAC respondents visit the Delta's waterways and natural areas at least monthly. More than half spend their time hiking, walking, or running or participating in water activities, such as boating, fishing, and swimming.

More than 60% of Delta-region DAC (including SDAC) respondents visit the Delta's waterways and natural areas at least once per month. More than half of Delta-region DAC (including SDAC) respondents participate in hiking, walking or running (59%) or water activities (53%) most frequently.¹ The region's SDAC participants similarly chose indicated participating in hiking, walking in running most frequently (58%). For this subset of respondents, there was a much larger gap between this most frequent activity and other activities. For SDAC participants, only 40% indicated participating in water activities most frequently, and in fact, 42% indicated that their most frequent activity is just hanging out (picnicking, sunbathing, etc.). In response to a question about what would make them want to spend more time outdoors, 68% of Delta-region DAC (including SDAC) respondents selected "better

¹ Note that respondents could select their first and second most frequent activity, so responses total to more than 100%.

parks, trails, or other recreational amenities.” Participant comments focused strongly on wanting clean, safe, accessible outdoor recreation, particularly around walking and biking trails, parks, and fishing spots.

6. Two thirds of Delta-region DAC respondents indicated that additional community services are needed in the Delta. Services to support the homeless (e.g., affordable housing and other basic services) and the food insecure (e.g., food banks) were the most frequently cited.

In addition to services for related to food and homeless residents, other services frequently identified included youth programming, health and medical services, affordable and quality housing, mental health and substance abuse programs, and senior services, and accompanying facilities to support these services.

7. There was a strong “no tunnel” sentiment expressed by Delta-region DAC respondents in several comment sections of the survey. Simultaneously, 95% of Delta-region DAC (including SDAC) selected “I don’t know enough to have a strong opinion at this time” in response to the question, “what is your opinion about the proposed project?”

The “no tunnel” sentiment against the Delta Conveyance Project was a theme throughout comments and was related to concerns about the Delta Conveyance Project benefiting only places outside of the Delta, and potential impacts to the natural environment, community and economy of the Delta. Concerns about the tunnel were extensive throughout the survey. However, of the Delta-region DAC and SDAC group who answered the question, “what is your opinion of the proposed project,” 95% responded, “I don’t know enough to have a strong opinion at this time.”

8. Almost three-quarters of Delta-region DAC respondents said “no benefits” in response to the question “What potential benefits [of the Delta Conveyance Project] could you see for your community?”

Nearly 70% of Delta-region DAC and SDAC commenters stated that no benefits are possible for the Delta region from the project. Others suggested that there would be ‘short term’ jobs, or reflected a hope that the project could support cleaner water, air and restoration. At the time of the survey, the DWR Community Benefits program was not in existence.²

9. The survey drew in new participation.

In response to a survey question that asked, “Have you ever participated in a public process related to a Delta tunnel proposal?,” more than 60% of both Delta-region DAC and SDAC respondents responded “no.” This indicated that there was significant increased participation from those who had never participated in the Delta Conveyance Project planning process before.

10. Outreach by individual community leaders generated more survey participation than any other outreach approach.

We did extensive, traditional outreach as well as what face to face outreach we could in a time of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, local leaders were the most important means for inviting participation from disadvantaged communities in the Delta. (Read more in Appendix A). From that experience and others, it was clear that working with embedded community leaders and organizations was an effective avenue for outreach in the community.

² As of 2021, DWR is developing a Community Benefits Program (<https://water.ca.gov/Programs/State-Water-Project/Delta-Conveyance/Community-Benefits-Program>) for the proposed Delta Conveyance Project which will ultimately identify and implement commitments, if the Delta Conveyance Project is approved, to help protect and enhance the cultural, recreational, natural resource and agricultural values of the Delta. More information can be found about the Delta Community Benefits Program at <https://water.ca.gov/Programs/State-Water-Project/Delta-Conveyance/Community-Benefits-Program>.

The survey input was rich and varied, with strong themes around the preservation of the Delta, its water ways, and way of life; about the Delta community and how it uses and depends on the Delta; and concerns about the impact of the proposed Delta Conveyance Project on the Delta.

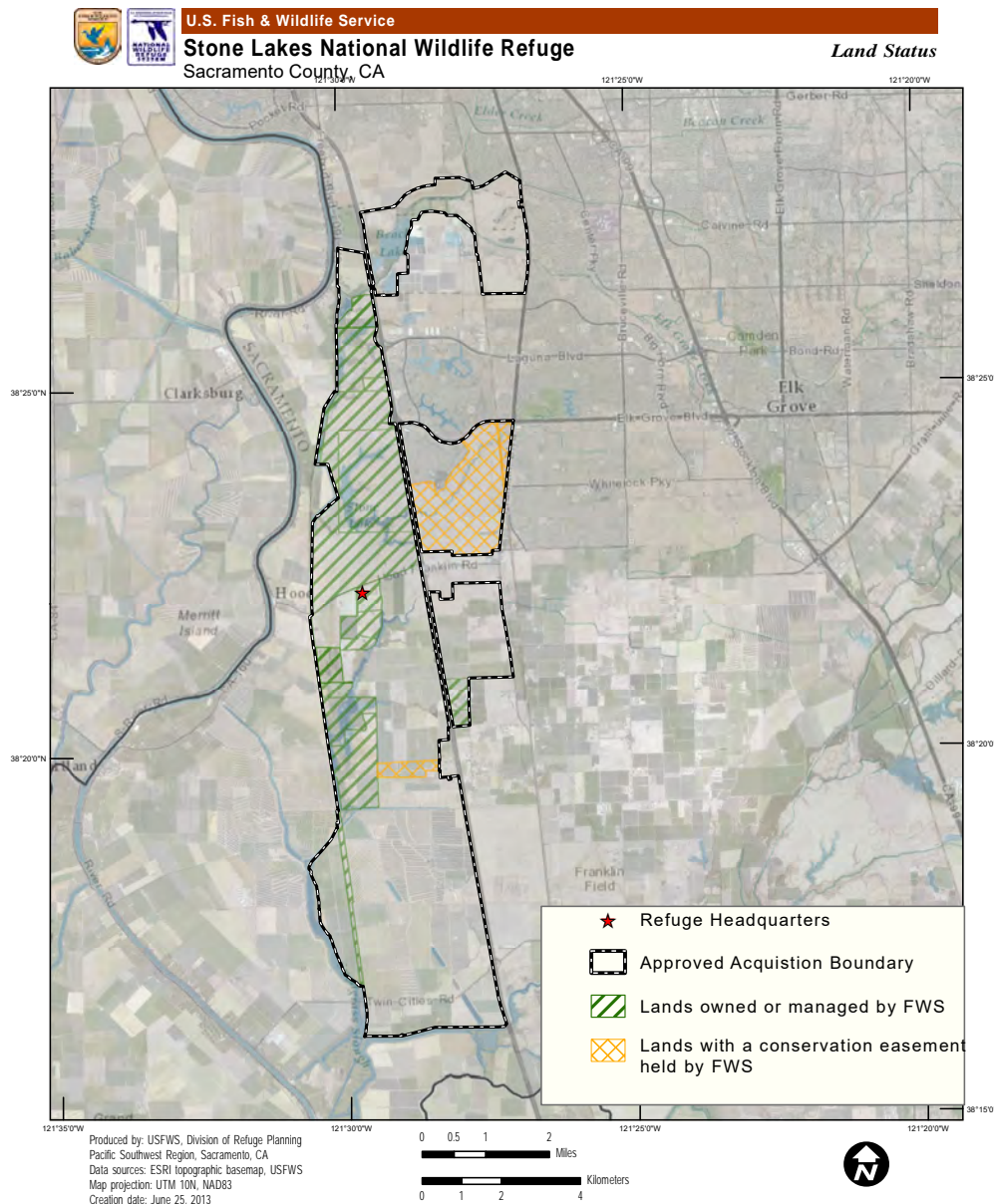
This report provides an overview of survey participation, including key definitions, as well as a summary of the responses and comments for each section for DACs, SDACs and all respondents. It also includes two appendices: Appendix A outlines survey outreach and marketing methods, including lessons learned and samples of outreach collateral; Appendix B details analytical assumptions of the survey and report.



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge

General Management Summary



Refuge Lands

Established in 1994 as the 505th refuge in the National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) System and located just 12 miles from the state's capitol, Stone Lakes NWR serves as a magnet for fish and wildlife in the northern Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta. The Refuge is part of a vast network of seasonally flooded agricultural lands and natural and managed wetlands that provide feeding and resting habitat for thousands of birds migrating along the Pacific Flyway.

Total Refuge Owned or Managed Lands:
6,550 acres

- Fee Title: 2,084 acres (10 parcels)
- Conservation Easement: 1,533 acres (2 parcels)
- Cooperative Agreement: 2,933 acres (grazing program)

Refuge Objectives

- Conserve and enhance Central Valley habitats for migratory waterbirds and wildlife corridors
- Protect and enhance Endangered and Threatened plants and wildlife
- Provide opportunities for wildlife-dependent visitor use

Wildlife and Habitat Management Goals

- Conserve, enhance, restore and manage Central Valley wetland, riparian, grassland and other native habitats to benefit their associated fish, wildlife, plants and special status species
- Conserve, enhance, and restore high quality migrating, wintering and breeding habitat for migratory birds within the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta of the Central Valley

"The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people."

Natural History

The Refuge supports 28 species considered either Endangered, Threatened, or Special Species of Concern, as well as habitat for those species.

- Habitats: Grasslands, seasonal and permanent wetlands, riparian forest, open water, and farmland
- Federal Endangered and Threatened species Refuge manages for habitat: Vernal Pool Fairy Shrimp, and Vernal Pool Tadpole Shrimp, Giant Garter Snake, Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle
- Other significant species include: Greater Sandhill Crane, Swainson's Hawk, Long-billed Curlew, Burrowing Owl, American Bald Eagle

Cultural History

- The Stone Lakes Basin and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta supported the highest concentration of Native Americans in the state
- Plains Miwok lived along the lake shores relying on abundant fish and wildlife
- The Refuge actively works with local native tribes on protection of the cultural resources and management of archaeological sites

Comprehensive Conservation Plan

- Completed in January 2007
- Refuge Project Boundary: 17,640 acres
- The plan describes the selected alternative for managing the Refuge for the next 15 years

Management Activities

- Actively managing seasonal and permanent wetlands, grasslands and riparian habitats
- Habitat restoration of native grasslands and riparian habitat
- Cooperative grazing and farming programs benefiting wildlife and native plants
- Enhancing wetlands with partners
- Controlling terrestrial and aquatic weeds
- Prescribed burning
- Monitoring and controlling mosquitoes
- Working with partners and volunteers to plant native trees and shrubs to restore riparian habitat



Wetland Maintenance - Photo: FWS

Public Use Opportunities

- Wildlife observation and photography
- Volunteer program
- Environmental education
- Docent guided tours
- Waterfowl hunting program
- Special seasonal birding tours
- Community events
- Paddle Program
- Blue Heron Trails



Stone Lakes NWR Volunteer leading a bird tour along managed wetlands - Photo: FWS

Visitor Contact Station: "Blue Heron Trails"

Opened in November 2011, Blue Heron Trails is an environmental education demonstration area open daily to the public from dawn to dusk. The site includes:

- Amphitheater
- Kiosks with interpretive panels
- Environmental Education program
- "Little Green Heron" Playscape
- Paved entrance road and parking
- Vehicle and school bus parking
- Permanent restroom facilities
- 3,084-foot paved universally accessible trail and boardwalk



Blue Heron Trails Interpretive Kiosk - Photo: FWS



Hands-on learning planting Blue Heron Trails - Photo: FWS

For More Information:

Stone Lakes NWR
1624 Hood Franklin Road
Elk Grove, CA 95757
Phone: 916/775-4421
Fax: 916/775-4407
www.fws.gov/refuge/stone_lakes

Delta Agriculture Overview

The California Legislature has found that the Delta's uniqueness is particularly characterized by its hundreds of miles of meandering waterways and the many islands adjacent to them, and has described the Delta's highly productive agriculture, recreational assets, fisheries, and wild life as invaluable resources. (Water Code section 12981.)

The Delta Stewardship Council's Delta Plan includes a goal to "Maintain Delta agriculture as a primary land use, a food source, a key economic sector, and a way of life."

The State of Delta Agriculture: Economic Impact, Conservation and Trends Dated February 3, 2020 by the State of California Delta Protection Commission lists the following Agricultural Output and Trends as well as Economic Impacts:

Agricultural Output and Trends

- Over 70 crops are harvested from 415,000 farmed acres in the Delta.
- Gross revenue of farms within the legal Delta totaled \$965 million in 2016.
- Corn and alfalfa are the most common crops in the Delta by acreage. These crops also provide valuable wildlife habitat.
- Wine grapes are now the leading revenue crop in the Delta with \$212 million in gross revenue in 2016, and processing tomatoes are second at \$116 million.
- Almonds and wine grapes are the fastest growing crops in the Delta, each adding over 10,000 acres between 2009 and 2016.
- Corn and alfalfa saw the biggest decreases in acreage with each decreasing by more than 10,000 acres between 2009 and 2016.
- The Delta's iconic asparagus crop was about 2,000 acres in 2016.
- San Joaquin County accounts for about 50% of Delta agriculture as measured by both acreage and revenue, followed by Sacramento County at about 18%.

Economic Impact

- In 2016, Delta farms supported about 12,400 jobs and \$1.7 billion in economic output in the five Delta counties, and 13,800 jobs and \$2 billion in output statewide.
- In addition, Delta-supported food and beverage manufacturing supported 3,350 jobs and \$972 million in output in Delta counties, and over 9,000 jobs and \$2.6 billion in output statewide.
- In total, Delta farms and related food and beverage manufacturing supported over 23,000 jobs across California and \$4.6 billion in output.

This map illustrates the distribution of agricultural land use in the Central Valley of California. The land is categorized into several types, each represented by a different color:

- Pasture (Light Green)
- Grain/Hay Crops (Yellow)
- Field Crops (Orange)
- Rice (Light Blue)
- Truck Crops (Red)
- Vineyards (Dark Purple)
- Other Deciduous (Dark Blue)
- Citrus/Subtropical (Light Purple)

The map shows a high concentration of agricultural land in the Central Valley, with a significant portion of the land being used for pasture and grain/hay crops. The distribution of other crop types is more varied, with truck crops and vineyards being prominent in certain areas. The map also shows major highways and cities in the region, including Sacramento, Elk Grove, Lodi, Stockton, Tracy, Antioch, and Vacaville.

Delta Conveyance Agricultural Disruption:

The Delta Tunnel project would result in the permanent conversion of thousands of acres of prime farmland, as well as temporary conversion of prime farmland.

200,000+ construction truck trips over 14 years on delta roads and highways would disrupt commodity transportation.

14 years of construction would permanently change the Delta landscape. There would be noise, air quality changes, and direct land impacts for construction and placement of tunnel muck.

The two large intakes would significantly change the aesthetic appeal of the Delta and make agri-tourism less inviting, as would the construction impacts. For instance, it would be less desirable to sip cider on the Delta as trucks roll by while watching and hearing a large intake facility being constructed. Decreased water quality and increased salinity in the Delta would negatively impact irrigation of crops. Most crops cannot survive irrigation with high salt water content over the long term.

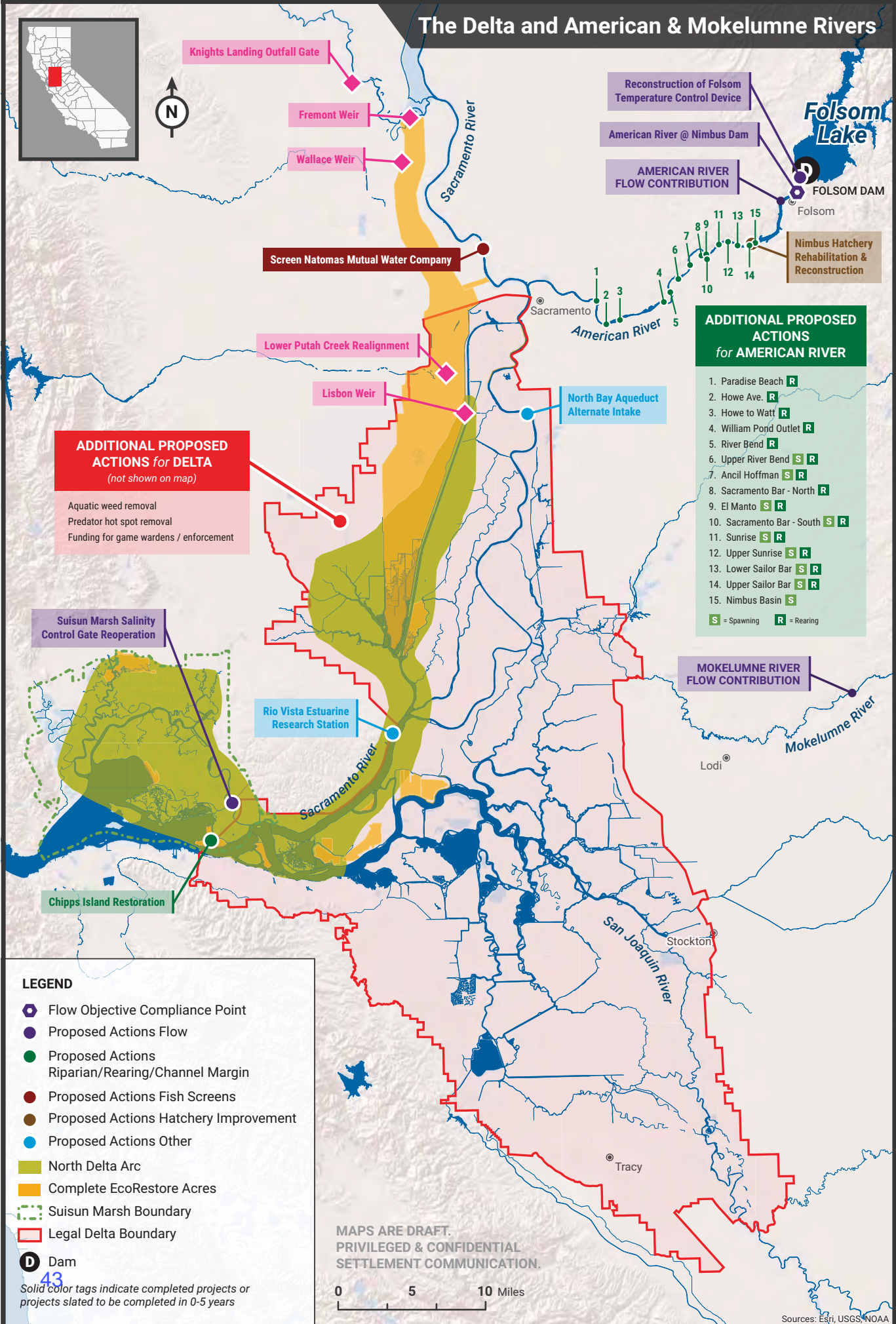
Reductions in irrigated acres and crop outputs affects the economies of scale that make agricultural production possible (e.g., processing, packing, shipping).

Any losses to agriculture would negatively affect the local economy as these economies rely in a large part on agricultural operations and related industries.

Reduced agricultural production would also reduce local investments potential in flood control structures that protect both local and statewide resources.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR SPECIES OBJECTIVES

The Delta and American & Mokelumne Rivers



Habitat restoration projects have many benefits, but can also affect neighboring properties, agriculture, infrastructure and water resources. Inclusion of Good Neighbor considerations into habitat restoration project planning can support agricultural communities, reinforce the benefits of conservation partnerships, reduce conflict and project delays, and help achieve sustainable conservation. Habitat restoration project planners and managers can use the following checklist to help ensure that restoration projects are planned and designed to avoid or reduce conflicts with existing neighboring land uses.

Some of the checklist items are also considered in California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and regulatory review processes. The purpose of the checklist is to encourage early conversations and coordination with neighboring interests, and it does not substitute for any other process.

Good Neighbor Restoration Projects:

Siting and Planning

- ☒ Is the project sited on public or conservation-entity owned lands, or where private property is required, has there been engagement to find willing sellers?
- ☒ If there are existing agricultural or conservation easements, has thought been given to how to incorporate or avoid conflicts with them?
- ☒ Is the project sited to avoid fragmenting existing farms?
- ☒ Have neighbors and stakeholders been included in the early planning stage?
- ☒ Will the project potentially disturb utilities, roads, bridges, or other infrastructure that serve local uses? If so, are those uses taken into account during project planning?
- ☒ Is the project designed to avoid interfering with other beneficial water uses (e.g., existing water diversions, boating, fishing, and recreation)?
- ☒ Will the project design avoid or reduce damage to nearby drainage, irrigation, and flood control facilities (e.g., levees) during construction and operation and avoid conflicting management practices?
- ☒ Has the project considered buffers where restoration lands could potentially interfere with surrounding agricultural lands or where agricultural lands could potentially interfere with restoration lands?
- ☒ As a result of the project, are special status species on the project site expected to increase markedly in abundance, and potentially move from the site to neighboring lands or waterways? If so, has coordination on safe harbor or other protections for neighboring land and water uses been considered?
- ☒ Is the project designed so that any new public access is compatible with, would benefit, and would avoid or reduce conflict with, local businesses, landowners and residents?

Construction, Operation and Maintenance

- ☒ Is the project designed to avoid or reduce project dust, traffic, vibration, noise, and lighting impacts?
- ☒ Is the project designed to minimize project traffic during commute and harvest periods?
- ☒ Has the project considered utilizing invasive species protection plans, including potential long-term commitments or funding to:
 - Protect against proliferation of mosquitos to protect against arboviruses, which can lead to injury and mortality of wildlife and humans?
 - Monitor and treat terrestrial and aquatic weeds and set specific triggers for action?
- ☒ Has the project considered monitoring and mitigating project-related changes to local water quality and quantity to:
 - Protect beneficial water uses from harmful algal blooms, nitrates, phosphorous, and methylmercury?
 - Avoid drainage, seepage or changes in the water table that impair neighboring agricultural or other activities?
- ☒ Does the project consider, as applicable, mitigation for conversion of productive agricultural land in the form of conservation easements, or other measures to enhance local agricultural productivity?
- ☒ Does the project have an operation and maintenance plan that includes, as applicable, the ability to maintain site security, prevent trespass, manage any publicly accessible areas, and control flooding and weeds?

Accessible Community Interface

- ☒ Does the project provide for an Ombudsman Office or other means to:
 - Facilitate stakeholders and affected landowners and local agency discussions regarding offsite impacts and options to address them?
 - Provide a way to discuss resolution of disputes prior to resorting to the Government Claims Act or other legal claims processes?
 - Provide regular project updates to the affected public?

Background and References for Proposed Good Neighbor Checklist

In 2020, a small group of Delta stakeholders representing reclamation districts, landowners and Delta counties approached the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to request that DWR work with them to update the Good Neighbor Checklist prepared in 2014 as part of the Agriculture and Land Stewardship Framework. Over the course of a few meetings, this updated draft checklist was created and later submitted to the Delta Stewardship Council for inclusion as an exhibit to proposed ER Recommendation B in the update to Delta Plan Chapter 4 - Protect, Restore, and Enhance the Delta Ecosystem. Representatives from Solano and Yolo Counties, the Delta Protection Commission, Delta Conservancy and DWR commented on the updated checklist, which built on the work of the key references listed below.

Department of Water Resources 2014, Agricultural and Land Stewardship Strategies.

<https://water.ca.gov/programs/california-water-plan/water-resource-management-strategies/agriculture-and-land-stewardship-framework>

Delta Conservancy 2019, Delta Public Lands Strategy

http://deltaconservancy.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Delta_Public_Lands_Strategy_Final_1-22-19.pdf

Department of Fish and Wildlife 2018, Delta Conservation Framework 2018-2050

<https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Watersheds/DCF>

Delta Stewardship Council 2019, Delta Plan Chapter 4 - Protect, Restore, and Enhance the Delta Ecosystem

<https://deltacouncil.ca.gov/pdf/delta-plan/2020-04-15-draft-ch-04.pdf>

All the Governor's Men: Life and love in the Delta town Newsom's tunnel would destroy

<https://sacramento.newsreview.com/2022/03/11/all-the-governors-men-life-and-love-in-the-delta-town-newsoms-tunnel-would-destroy/>



The Delta town of Hood along the Sacramento River. Photograph by Scott Thomas Anderson

BY: SCOTT THOMAS ANDERSON

Hood is a Sacramento County testament to farming know-how and the migrant dream – and an obstacle to the state's most powerful lobbyists

There's a final light on the cherry orchards, sundown brightening bricks on Hood's River Road Exchange building as it touches the relic's sloped hump and frosted sugar-cube windows from another era. Voices are laughing past the structure's mammoth Art Deco façade. The evening sharpens its palms, their leaves fanning ahead of the battered tin roof to a packing shed from the Great Depression. A few women in evening gowns stop to observe it – a kind of canary-yellow Noah's Arch steadily suspended over the Sacramento River. They can see how it's hunching on old wood poles that drill down where twilight meets a calm crystal mirage on the current.

Sunsets like this were common when the late artist Wayne Thiebaud lived in Hood in the 1960s and 70s. Thiebaud's paintbrush captured this corner of the North Delta in muted and delicate colors, his visions settling into cotton candy dreams of the how the bending river kissed its fields and the windbreak trees splashed fading shadows on fruit groves.

It still looks that way here.

Brett Hall Jones, whose late mother, the photographer Barbara Hall, grew up in the same ornate Victorian that Thiebaud painted in when Hood was his home, says the waterway flowing by that ranch to the center of town represents a generational convergence for artists, fieldworkers and homesteaders.

“It’s all of California history,” Jones reflects. “It’s a stunning place – incredibly beautiful.”

Tonight, a crowd of visitors in tuxedos and gowns are glimpsing the agricultural part of Hood’s legacy. That’s because the River Road Exchange building – a place where Stillwater Orchards once moved fruit from steamer boats onto boxcars that were lurching up the wharf’s train spur – is now the Willow Ballroom, an events venue that combines rustic nuances with Golden State grace. Inside, there are drapes falling over time-tempered columns. There’s dripping wax torches and shabby chic candelabums throwing light on the spacious, homespun floorplan. With every gala held here, the Willow Ballroom becomes a better-known escape for urbanites seeking some country elegance only 15 minutes by car from Sacramento’s border. That also means the ballroom has become the main ambassador introducing Northern Californians to this tiny, highly threatened town of Hood.

Threatened because of state officials and the financial muscle of special interest groups in Southern California.

But what exactly is Hood? Is it just the lightly populated remnant of a settlement from 1860? Little more than a long-ago junction? Viewed through that lens, choking the town’s commerce and livability to death with up to two decades of intense, nonstop construction– along with the government commandeering much of its land through widespread eminent domain seizures – might seem like a fair trade to build the state’s controversial Delta tunnel. At least, it might to advocates who argue the project will provide more water security to far-off, billion-dollar agribusinesses.

But to the families who live in Hood, the town represents something much different: It signals a multicultural testament to the migrant farming story of California. Beginning in World War II, a cadre of Mexican-American and Spanish-descended families re-settled in Hood in order to keep the Delta’s bountiful bread basket flourishing as local men fought a nightmare on two fronts. These industrious newcomers worked Hood’s Bartlett pear orchards so well that the Delta got more involved with the Bracero Program, which allowed Mexican nationals to legally become Americans as they took up the area’s ranch and fieldwork. Over time, those families who came between the attack on Pearl Harbor and onset of the Vietnam War made themselves into an enduring part of Hood’s DNA. According to the 2019 census data, nearly 70% of the town’s 313 residents are Hispanic; and people around Hood can usually break down how most of the community descends from those original families who saved Delta farming during the nation’s darkest hour.

They were personalities who largely stayed in Hood, allowing it to remain a vibrant part of Sacramento County’s \$455 million annual agricultural economy by growing cherries, almonds and wine grapes. But their role in California’s ag accomplishments could soon be erased, along with

those of the Portuguese, Dutch, Chinese and Japanese farmers who worked the Delta before them.



In recent years, the official environmental documents for the California Department of Water Resources' proposed Delta conveyance system – first known as “twin tunnels,” now envisioned as a large single tunnel – have predicted an unimaginable future to many living in the estuary from Clarksburg to Isleton. They estimate 14 to 20 years of relentless, ground-punishing construction along the old levee roads and nearby fields – the residents and business owners who stay having to live with stadium-lit excavation, deep dredging, steel pile-driving, ground well-draining and the demolition of historic homes. They'll also have to try to coexist with constant big-rig traffic that could make it impossible for businesses to stay open and **farmers to get their harvests to market**. DWR's own documents show

that, once the tunnel is finished, swaths of that bucolic beauty that Wayne Thiebaud framed with his paint brush will be transformed into a steel-and-concrete industrial no man's land. The state's maps, models and schematics don't lie: The character of North Delta running through Sacramento, Yolo and San Joaquin counties would be irreparably altered. The word that people who live here would use, is “desecrated.”

The town of Hood stands at ground zero.

Just a few weeks before the pandemic hit, town folk got an early shock when DWR officials unveiled the “down-sized” version of the tunnel that Gov. Gavin Newsom had ordered then to recalibrate. While the newer conveyance system changed from dual tunnels to one, the plan still called for two 1,000-foot-long metallic intakes along a six-mile stretch of the Sacramento River, one gargantuan station on each side of Hood. Additionally, the plan called for Hood to be caught between several long-term construction yards and geotechnical exploration zones.

Tom Keeling, an attorney who's spent more than a decade representing local counties and Delta farmers on eminent domain issues around the tunnel, said more than 125 property owners have already battled DWR all the way to the California Supreme Court over access to, and the future of, their lands. The state's latest models indicate the next stage of that fight will happen on parcels to the immediate north and south of Hood along Highway 160. The seizures could even extend into the town itself. The full amount of forced access and land acquisition that DWR will need for the tunnel's enormous intakes is a figure the department still hasn't revealed. But, based on what he already knows of the DWR and its project, Keeling told SN&R that the intakes will spell “an intense need for private property.”

The Whaley family, who restored Hood's landmark fruit exchange with the grandeur of the Willow Ballroom – and who tonight are hosting a hundred happy Sacramentans under fairy lights and

evening clouds over the river – knows better than most Californians that the state is fully capable of casting that large of an eminent domain net. Their family has lived through two seizures like it before, first when the federal government demanded the abandonment, takeover and ultimate destruction of the town of Port Chicago along Suisun Bay west of the Delta in 1965; and then when DWR legally took control of 500 acres of the Whaley family's property on Winter Island in the Delta in 2016. For the Whaleys, there's no question that state department heads working under Newsom would do it.

At the moment, Angelica Whaley, the youngest member of the family, is dressed in sleek black attire as she escorts guests around the wood columns and dapper bouquets of the ballroom. Understanding Hood's current peril, Angelica reluctantly agreed to join a Stakeholder Engagement Committee that the state put together while designing its latest version of the tunnel. The committee was billed as a way to give Delta residents and indigenous tribes up river a voice as the culturally impactful project moved ahead. Angelica soon decided the committee was anything but: She watched in dismay as DWR proceeded full-steam ahead with the tunnel even after the state's own independent team of engineers released an analysis calling it "logistically impractical"; she scratched her head as officials appointed by the state pressured her committee to work through the scariest part of the pandemic and then got caught misleading a commission about it; she was startled by an SN&R investigation that revealed the state's top official for the tunnel was being paid twice as much as the governor to steer the project to completion; and she was appalled when DWR filed a lawsuit that sought to block every Californian from contesting how it will finance the tunnel's \$22 billion price tag.

In September 2021, Angelica and several other members of the Stakeholder Engagement Committee officially resigned, describing it as a lip service illusion intended to provide political cover for greenlighting the tunnel quicker. Now, Angelica is waiting. She's waiting to see whether or not – if the Newsom administration continues to ignore independent scientists and environmental groups about the tunnel potentially collapsing the Delta's wildlife habitat – a slew of court battles might still somehow save this farming community she's come to love.

"We were basically asked not to speak. We were silenced, honestly," Angelica says of the committee. "How do you sleep at night, knowing that you're literally destroying the ecosystem of the Delta? In a lot of institutional government projects like this, they do this 'outreach' to make themselves feel better and sleep at night. They tell themselves, 'Oh, well, we're engaging the community, so what we're about to do has to be OK.' Well, it's not OK. Not in this case."

After a pause, she adds, "Whenever we'd press them, they'd say that this is all hypothetical. It doesn't feel hypothetical. This is our life – this is our home."

Scenes from sundown



Another night with the river moon.

A car drifts down Highway 160 where gnarled oaks along the Sacramento reach into contours of moonlight falling over the channel. For an instant, headlights break the sky's pale spell of cobalt blending with waves that slip by vines and wild oats spread across the shore. When there are no lights, it's a perfect picture of stillness and breezes. The levee is pocked with old farming mansions that seem to lean back into this chroma of lunar color, with their splintered wood columns and threadbare balconies struck against a fading spectral

pearl on the horizon. People here think that you can't know the river moon from a car window. They say you won't catch its rural witchery with the technology on your cell phone. Some living in the estuary claim you need to sense the silence, and hear the night owls, and watch the subtle movements of the tide, to really understand it. But known or unknown, the river moon is out tonight – in full satin force over the dipping berms and sunken orchards.

Down the road, lamps are burning against the crimson stone of what was once Hood's mercantile and supply store. Like the Willow Ballroom, this hardened Delta survivor has been gradually restored into a new center of life, with its ragtag river charm conjuring an atmosphere somewhere between hayseed style and working-class refinement. The bustling restaurant inside is called Hood Ranch Kitchen; and sitting with elbows on its bar and a ballcap turned backwards is Mario Moreno, a life-long Hood resident who many call the unofficial mayor of the town. Mario has a big voice and booming smile and appears to generate a mini-party everywhere he goes. At the moment, he's cutting and carving his way through a huge slab of dripping, ruby-centered prime rib while sitting next to his 29-year-old son, Marcus.

Mario's years growing up in Hood include memories of collecting crawdads in the irrigation ditches, fishing under blue oaks that draped the river, watching almond blossoms explode in the warmer season and tracking flocks of geese under the clouds while he rode his bike for miles on the levee road to Sutter Island. In 1978, when Mario was 13, the very last train from Southern Pacific snorted its way up the spur to Hood's aging wharf. That meant the town was no longer a commerce junction. For Mario, it would still remain a place where every kid was welcomed into every living room, as if Hood itself was one extended family.

Seven years ago, Mario retired as an energy advisor from SMUD. Marcus, on the other hand, has graduated from University of the Pacific with a master's degree in civil engineering. When Mario thinks about his family's journey within the California story, coming to Hood as farm laborers in the 1940s to discover a quiet, stable way of life that allowed him to have a middle-class career –

and allowed his son to strive for greater professional ambitions – he sees a microcosm of what the town has meant to so many families connected with it. That trajectory started when a number Mexican-American and Spanish-descended households came to Hood during the labor shortages of World War II. Mario knows those surnames well: the Montano family, the Ortiz family, the Lujan family, the Chacon family – the Moreno family. Most of these families had first settled in Colorado before later coming out west to Hood. At some point, the Lucero and Dominguez families arrived to help build the town, too.

Mario says most of these hardworking field clans had their roots in Mexico’s Michoacan and Jalisco regions. Some of their third and fourth generations have been forging a new path, graduating from institutions such as McGeorge School of Law or landing jobs all the way at the state capital. It’s this cultural evolution that sprouted from Hood’s history and way of life, allowing younger people like Marcus to become an engineer, that sometimes chokes Mario up with unexpected emotion.

“These families continue to live in this town to this very day,” Mario mutters, fighting back tears. “And they’ve contributed to building their local economy by working, and they contributed to raising families, to the point where some of their grandkids have achieved all these things. It’s that typical migrant story that resonates. It’s people who have wanted to better their lives ... When I come at it that way, it’s just, ‘Wow, who would have thought?’”



Mario Moreno at the Hood Ranch Kitchen.

On this night under the river moon, Mario and his son are laughing as they chat with farmers and town folk around the bar. Like most regulars at Hood Kitchen, they’re big fans of its chef, Emiliano Zappata, a calm, soft-spoken man who has an easy smile when he’s greeting regulars. Between mastering Omaha Ribeyes and grilling up shrimp scampi in butter, garlic and white wine, Zappata sometimes finds moments to step out into the dining room to make sure everyone is enjoying their dishes. Lately, even with the supply chain chaos, Zappata has managed to continue getting ahold of

top-quality beef cuts, enough to drive demand for Hood Ranch’s wildly popular prime rib Thursdays into an additional Friday night affair.

As Mario and Marcus are digging into Zappata’s gorgeously marbled prime rib, one of the restaurant’s owners, Ben White, is also making the rounds with locals as the night darkens. Ben and his wife Kim took over Hood Ranch Kitchen two years ago and immediately established a reputation for treating employees like family. Many in Hood feel they’ve shown a similar commitment to the town, with Ben serving as one of the North Delta’s volunteer firefighters. The couple’s bar manager, Jamie Chapin, lives just up the road from Hood Kitchen. She’s come to see the hamlet as a genuinely unique place.

“What I love about it, personally, is that there is a really big sense of community here,” Chapin says. “Even though I’m relatively new, I can’t drive down the street without six different people waving at me. I feel safe because I know that everyone in town is looking out for me. There’s just a true sense of togetherness.”

That togetherness can be glimpsed in the lawn signs all around Hood that read, “No tunnel is worth our town.”

‘Rosebud’



A fishing boat skims down the Sacramento River, drawing its wake through reflections of trees conjured by a bright open sky. Just over the levee from it, tree branches sway in slight movements above a pink, three-story Italianate manor house. The structure is a decorative edifice of arched windows, soffited eaves, gabled touches and fluted Corinthian columns. Built in 1877, this study of hipped roofs and paneled friezes is known as Rosebud Ranch.

The San Francisco photographer Barbara Hall’s very first memory was of this place. She lived on the ranch’s property with her mother, Harriet, who every night would go down the bank to swim under the river moon. Through the fog of time, Hall could picture the drip-drop of water hitting worn floorboards as it came off Harriet’s locks

whenever she’d return. Hall was the great-granddaughter of state senator William Johnstone. A political force in Sacramento agriculture, Johnstone convinced the same architect who’d designed the California Governor’s mansion to dream up this eye-catching estate along the water. When Hall was 5 years old, Harriet suddenly died. She was forced to live inside Rosebud’s looming house while being raised by Johnstone’s two prim, reclusive and aging daughters, whom Hall would always remember as holdover Victorian ladies. Much later, in the 1970s, when Hall’s photography was being featured in gallery shows around the Bay Area, this native daughter of Hood could still picture fieldworkers and ranch hands gathering at the porch of the big house; and she could envision going down to meet boats along Rosebud’s docks with large bundles of cherries; and she could recall the starving, river-wanders of the Depression knocking at the backdoor; and she could see and smell the wonders of a Chinese immigrant camp on the edge of the property, where a big cauldron of cooking food was constantly bubbling over an open fire.

Hall may have photographed the world's far-off places, and made portraits of the best-known writers and poets of the West, but her memories of growing up in Hood remained part of her identity as a California artist.

"She loved everything about growing up at Rosebud Ranch, except her broken heart over her mother," says daughter Brett Hall Jones. "She had clear and loving memories of the place, and in her later years, not long before she passed, those memories really just started pouring out."



Barbara Hall around the age she left Rosebud Ranch.

In 1968, Wayne Thiebaud bought Rosebud Ranch from Barbara Hall's brother, Jack. Thiebaud had already been painting for a decade and had a solo show at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Thiebaud gained a reputation within the Pop Art movement with soft paintings of everyday American stand-ins, confections and desserts from lemon meringue pies to cherry-topped ice cream sundaes. Over the decades, the versatility of his brush outgrew the Pop Art designation. Thiebaud eventually pushed himself toward imaginative figure studies and intriguing illustrations of landscapes. At least four of the landscapes were centered on the North Delta and its farms and fields around Hood.

Mimi Miller, wife of Thiebaud's close friend, the late Sacramento mayor Burnett Miller, was close with the famous artist back when he lived at Rosebud Ranch. She says that, for a time, the area around Hood was a constant part of Thiebaud's creative life.

"He painted a lot when he was out there," Mimi recalls. "His signature had a rose in it, and I think that would have come from Rosebud Ranch."

Thiebaud's paintings are now featured in some of the most prestigious art galleries in the United States. He passed away, in Sacramento, in December of 2021. Barbara Hall had passed away in 2018.



One of Wayne Thiebaud's Delta paintings.

Rosebud Ranch is officially on the National Register of Historic Places. That's because of its place in Thiebaud's career, as well as the fact that it was designed by pathfinding California architect Nathaniel Goodell. Rosebud Ranch is also directly in the crosshairs of the Delta tunnel. Specifically, DWR's models show that one of the project's Deathstar-like 1,000-foot steel-and-

concrete intakes would be built almost immediately in front of the lauded old house.

"DWR has never reached out to us, but we have attended countless public hearings over the past 10 years," explains Cheryl Cox, who now owns Rosebud Ranch with her husband, John. "Each comment and every letter has fallen on deaf ears. ... Their plan is to take our property by eminent domain and tear it down. They intend to ignore the historical significance of Rosebud. ... Our home would be demolished to make room for the project's access road that will divert Hwy 160 away from the river."

With indigenous tribes, fishing associations, environmental and conservation groups and a great many Southern California ratepayers opposing the tunnel, who exactly are the project's main supporters? Within the public-private sector, the driving force has been **the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California**, or MWD, the largest water contractor in the state. MWD has spent millions helping finance the Joint Powers Authority that's tasked with designing the tunnel and getting it approved. In December of 2020, its board of directors **ignored hours of public outcry from customers** and voted to spend another \$58 million to help continue funding the tunnel's design.

In the corporate world, the tunnel's big champions have been **Lynda and Steward Resnick**, billionaire almond and pistachio barons known for their philanthropy, including giving hundreds of millions to California Institute of Technology and bankrolling PBS endeavors like the films of Ken Burns. The Resnicks have donated more than \$366,800 directly to Gavin Newsom's campaign and, last year, officially underwrote the effort to prevent the governor from being recalled from office.

Newsom's team did not respond to an interview request for this story. When the governor downsized the earlier two-tunnel version of the project, he said it was because of water and environmental concerns, adding, "I don't support the twin tunnels. We can, however, built on the important work that's already been done." Since DWR revealed that Newsom's newer version is arguably just as destructive to the North Delta – particularly to Hood – as the earlier version, Newsom has made few public comments on the matter.



*Locals eating at Hood Ranch Kitchen.
Courtesy photo*

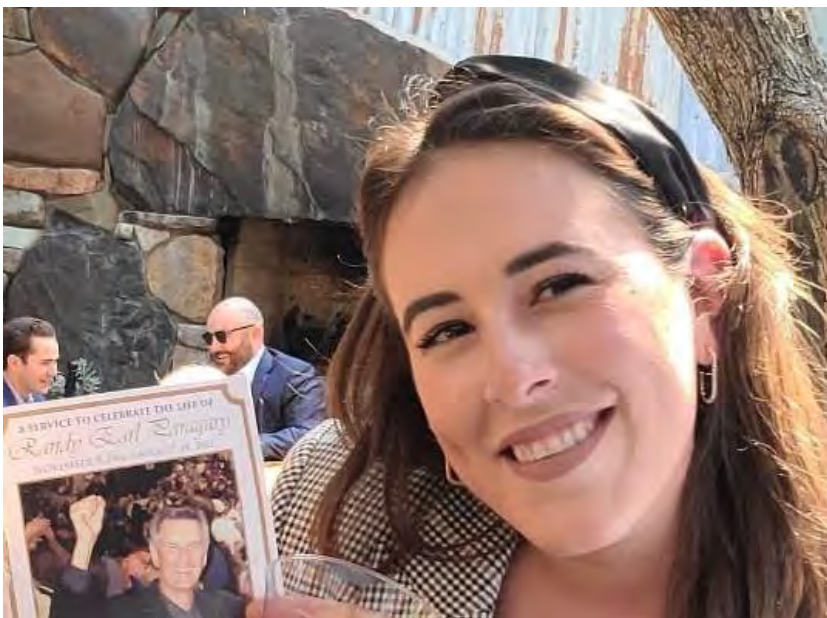
A draft of DWR's latest environmental impact report for the tunnel is expected to be released in mid-2022, followed by a public comment period. Once that EIR is completed, there is a high likelihood that numerous county governments, Delta farmers, environmental groups – and the California fishing industry – will all immediately sue to stop the project.

At that point, the fate of Hood and its surrounding communities could end up in the hands of a judge. Again.

"It would be an outrage, and the saddest thing in the world, if Rosebud Ranch and the town of Hood were lost," says Jones. "I think it would be the erasure of a place."

For Angelica Whaley, the thousands of new people who are discovering Hood through her ballroom, or through the Hood Ranch Kitchen, might offer a ray of hope when it comes to more political support.

"People are just amazed that such an incredible place exists," Angelica notes. "They just want to know all about what's on the river, because there's a yearning for that – to get back to their roots and be somewhere that's not on the grid. And they love that it's a beautiful place that's just outside Sacramento. That's what the Delta is."



Angelica Whaley.

Recalling she grew up just a few miles down the river in Courtland, she adds, "the Delta is a place that people come back to: People from here know the joy of having a childhood playing in the pear orchards, and being close enough to walk to your friends and neighbors. There's something to be said for all that."

Mario Moreno agrees. As someone who'll go to the dirt to sing Hood's praises, he thinks that newer visitors to the town will find their

real treasure in conversations and connections with locals.

“The town’s story just represents those things we all, as Americans, value,” Mario reflects. “We take pride in our community and hopefully that shows in our hospitality and our friendships.”



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