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January 9, 2020

Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814


Dear Governor Newsom,

Pursuant to the provisions of Public Resources Code § 29780, I am proud to submit the 2019 Delta Protection Commission Annual Report for your review.

The Commission and its dedicated staff made great strides towards the protection, maintenance, enhancement, and enrichment of the overall quality of the Delta environment and economy.

It is our mission to support agriculture, recreation, cultural heritage, and natural resources in the Delta. We continue our dedication to that mission through the ongoing advancement of our Strategic Plan (Vision 2030) while being adaptable to emerging challenges and opportunities.

With full support of all the Commission members, it is an honor to offer you the Delta Protection Commission Action 2019.

Sincerely,

Oscar Villegas
Chair
BACKGROUND

The Delta Protection Act was adopted by the Legislature in 1992 and last amended in 2009. The Delta Protection Act declares that the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is “a natural resource of statewide, national, and international significance, containing irreplaceable resources, and that it is the policy of the State to recognize, preserve, and protect those resources of the Delta for the use and enjoyment of current and future generations.”

The Delta Protection Commission was created under the 1992 Act to recognize and protect the unique cultural, recreational, natural and agricultural resources of the Delta, and the 2009 amendments to the Act further defined it as “the appropriate agency to identify and provide recommendations to the Delta Stewardship Council on methods of preserving the Delta as an evolving place.” With this mandate, the Commission focuses on the oversight of Delta land use and resource management, levees and emergency response, the support of Delta agriculture, recreation, tourism and local economic development, and the protection of Delta historic, cultural and natural resources.

The fifteen members of the Commission include a member of the County Board of Supervisors from each of the five Delta counties (Contra Costa, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Solano, and Yolo); three elected city council members representing cities throughout the Delta; representatives from North, Central, and South Delta Reclamation Districts; and representatives from the California State Transportation Agency, California Natural Resources Agency, California Department of Food and Agriculture, and California State Lands Commission. Two ex-officio members represent the California State Senate and the California State Assembly.

As required by Public Resources Code § 29780, each year the Commission submits to the Governor and the State Legislature this Annual Report, describing the progress Commission actions have made towards fulfilling the requirements of the Delta Protection Act.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Committed to the Protection and Health of the Delta

Land & Water
In its role advising the Delta Conservancy, Commission staff evaluated Proposition 1 grant applications, contributing to $11 million in grant awards for seven projects. In our role as the voice of the Delta, staff contributed to other Delta agency processes including the Delta Plan Five-Year Review. Staff continued working on an update to the Land Use and Resource Management Plan, and tracking the Water Resilience Portfolio, and Delta Conveyance Design and Construction Authority Stakeholder Engagement Committee.

Regional Economy
Significant progress on the Commission’s Economic Sustainability Plan update continued in 2019 with the final wrap up of the Agriculture chapter and presentation of the preliminary findings to the Commission. Commission staff retained a consultant and kicked off the Recreation and Tourism chapter update, anticipated for completion by the end of 2020. Staff wrapped up work with the University of California at Davis, Center for Regional Change on socioeconomic indicators for the Delta and developed a set of infographics for presentation to stakeholders.

Delta Heritage
In March 2019, the Commission became the local coordinating entity for California’s first National Heritage Area – the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area – and commenced work on the management plan. Commission staff held the second annual Delta Heritage Forum in Walnut Grove. A Broadband Action Plan was completed for five Delta legacy communities. Staff held two meetings of the Delta Asian and Pacific Islander Heritage Advisory Committee and four meetings of the Delta as Place Interagency Working Group.

Recreation & Tourism
Commission staff completed the Great California Delta Trail Eastern Region Blueprint (San Joaquin, Yolo, and Sacramento counties) and kicked-off the Great California Delta Trail Master Plan development. Staff also collaborated with the city of West Sacramento to install more than a dozen new trail signs on the Riverwalk and Clarksburg Branch Line segments of the Great California Delta Trail. Continued momentum on the Delta Marketing Campaign included the creation of a printed Delta Recreation Map. In 2019 California State University, Sacramento researchers retained by the Commission completed the report “Recreation & Tourism in the Delta: A Study of Preferences for Activities and Facilities, Information Sources and Economic Contributions of Delta Events.”

Outreach & Education
Another engaged group of Delta Leadership Program participants graduated and are out making a difference in the Delta. The Commission expanded its reach across all communication channels and public engagement shaped Commission projects for the better. Accessibility, outreach to Spanish-language speakers, and consistency in branding and voice were priorities for 2019.
The Commission has four types of authority when reviewing Delta land use and resource projects:

1. Commission jurisdiction over “development” in the primary zone through implementation of the Land Use and Resource Management Plan (LURMP). There are two components of LURMP implementation:
   a. The Commission reviews and approves proposed local government general plan amendments affecting the primary zone.
   b. Local governments are responsible for ensuring that land use decisions in the primary zone are consistent with the LURMP. Commission staff review proposed projects relative to the LURMP and provide comments to local governments. The Commission serves as an appeal body if a land use decision is challenged as inconsistent with the LURMP.

2. Non-jurisdictional projects – federal and State projects, and local agency projects in the secondary zone that may affect Delta resources.


4. Seeking opportunities to further develop the Great California Delta Trail.

Commission staff provided comment letters on a portion of the projects they reviewed over the course of the year. Of the nine projects commented on by the Commission this year, two would convert farmed land to a non-farmed use, including approximately 1,000 acres designated as Farmland of Local Importance for a wetlands restoration project, and approximately 1,500 acres of Prime Farmland and grazing land for a tidal marsh and floodplain habitat restoration project. The Commission did not hear land use appeals over the course of 2019.
Multi-County

2020 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS): Long-range, integrated land use and transportation strategy for the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) region.

**Authority:** Jurisdictional development project; Great California Delta Trail; Non-jurisdictional project that may affect Delta resources

**Zone:** Primary/Secondary

**Comments:** Encourage SACOG to consider LURMP when assessing MTP/SCS consistency with applicable land use plans, policies, and regulations and to discuss the Delta Trail in the recreation and transportation setting sections. Proposed improvements would benefit Delta communities and primary zone, though Kammerer Road Extension could have negative impact on primary zone without mitigation.

**Project Size:** Delta portions of Sacramento and Yolo counties

**Farmland Conversion:** No

City of Sacramento 2040 General Plan Update and Climate Action Plan

**Authority:** Non-jurisdictional project that may affect Delta resources

**Zone:** Secondary

**Comments:** Encourage Project Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to consider LURMP when assessing General Plan Update’s consistency with applicable land use plans, policies, and regulations, particularly with respect to Freeport, and to discuss the Delta Trail.

**Project Size:** Citywide

**Farmland Conversion:** Unknown

Sherman Island Belly Wetland Restoration Project:

Restoration of approximately 1,000 acres of palustrine emergent wetlands within 1,936-acre area

**Authority:** Non-jurisdictional project that may affect Delta resources

**Zone:** Primary

**Comments:** Commission supportive of projects that provide natural habitat, subsidence reversal, and carbon sequestration on State-owned properties. Urge DWR to review for compliance with LURMP.

**Project Size:** 1,936 acres

**Farmland Conversion:** Yes, restoration on approximately 1,000 acres

Grand Island Seepage Cutoff Wall Project:

Repair of approximately 1,250 linear feet of levee on west side of Grand Island.

**Authority:** Non-jurisdictional project that may affect Delta resources

**Zone:** Primary

**Comments:** Support projects that provide flood protection and stability for Delta levee system. Encourage consultation with broader levee community when determining the timing of road closures.

**Project Size:** 12 acres

**Farmland Conversion:** No

Sacramento County

Installation of Speed Table on River Road: Located in Walnut Grove.

**Authority:** Non-jurisdictional project that may affect Delta resources

**Zone:** Primary

**Comments:** Commission supports projects that would reduce speeding and protect public safety on Delta transportation infrastructure. Walnut Grove Community Action Plan called for traffic calming measures.

**Project Size:** 0 acres

**Farmland Conversion:** No

2017 Storm Damage Department of Water Resources (DWR) Rehabilitation – Phase 4 and 5 Repair Sites: Non-emergency repair of levees damaged during the winter of 2016/2017.

**Authority:** Non-jurisdictional project that may affect Delta resources

**Zone:** Primary/Secondary

**Comments:** Commission supportive of projects that provide needed flood protection and stability for levee system. Urge DWR to review for compliance with LURMP.

**Project Size:** 0 acres

**Farmland Conversion:** No
Yolo County

West Capitol Road Rehabilitation Project:
Rehabilitates pavement, implements safety improvements, and modifies vehicle lanes and traffic signals.

**Authority:** Great California Delta Trail

**Zone:** Secondary

**Comments:** Commission supports projects that improve recreational opportunities for bicyclists and pedestrians within the Delta.

**Project Size:** 63 acres

**Farmland Conversion:** No

San Joaquin County

Smith Canal Gate Project:
Design and construction of fixed wall and gate at mouth of Smith Canal, adjacent to the San Joaquin River/Stockton Deep Water Ship Channel.

**Authority:** Advising Delta Stewardship Council on Covered Actions

**Zone:** Secondary

**Comments:** Commission earlier provided comments on Notice of Preparation and Draft EIR. No further comments regarding the project and do not have any comments on the appeal before the Council.

**Project Size:** 96.3 acres

**Farmland Conversion:** No

Solano County

Lookout Slough Tidal Habitat Restoration and Flood Improvement Project:
Restoration of approximately 3,400-acre site to tidal wetland.

**Authority:** Non-jurisdictional project that may affect Delta resources

**Zone:** Primary

**Comments:** Request review of potential impacts concerning water, neighbors, and aquatic endangered species. Commission supportive of projects that protect natural resources and preserve agriculture. Urge DWR to review for consistency with LURMP.

**Project Size:** 3,400 acres

**Farmland Conversion:** Yes, restoration on approximately 1,500 acres
Vision 2030 highlights the fact that “water is the lifeblood of the Delta” and affirms the Commission’s legislative mandate to conserve agricultural land and economically sustainable agricultural operations in the Delta. Actions regarding land and water are the core of the Commission’s mission - protecting the fields and waterways that are the natural treasures of the Delta.

Delta Conveyance
In early 2019 the Governor announced his intention to redirect the CA WaterFix project to a single tunnel conveyance. Commission staff participated in the Delta Roundtable hosted by the Natural Resources Agency Secretary and monitored the Delta Conveyance Design and Construction Authority meetings in late 2019.

Monitoring Land Use
The Commission commented on nine land use projects, most in Sacramento County, Yolo County, and multiple counties (see pages 5-6).

Propositions 1 and 68 Grants
In 2019, Commission staff participated in the evaluation of Delta Conservancy (Conservancy) Proposition 1 grant applications; the Conservancy awarded approximately $11 million in grant funding for seven projects. With Commission staff input, the Conservancy developed new guidelines for a Proposition 68 Community and Economic Enhancement Grant Program to fund approximately $12 million for recreation and tourism, historic and cultural preservation, and environmental education, with special focus on grant-making to lower-income disadvantaged communities. These non-competitive, open solicitation grants will be available beginning in 2020.

Land Use and Resource Management Plan Update
Commission staff continued to work on the update to the Land Use and Resource Management Plan. Staff and the Delta Protection Advisory Committee held a series of public workshops on the staff draft to gather input. The Commission subcommittee met and additional outreach to stakeholders was conducted in preparation for an updated staff draft. Work on updating the LURMP will continue into 2020.

Delta Stewardship Council Delta Plan Amendments
The Delta Stewardship Council (Council) continued work on the Ecosystem Chapter amendment and completed the Five-Year Review of the Delta Plan. Commission staff provided input to the Council on the impact the proposed amendment will have on the statutory requirement to protect and enhance the unique cultural, recreational, natural resource, and agricultural values of the Delta as an evolving place.
THE YEAR AHEAD

**Delta Stewardship Council Delta Plan Amendments**
The Council intends to finalize the proposed amendment to Chapter 4 of the Delta Plan (Ecosystem) and finalize the Five-Year Review of the Delta Plan. Commission staff will continue to provide input to Council staff on the impact this proposed amendment and review will have on the statutory requirement to protect and enhance the unique cultural, recreational, natural resource, and agricultural values of the Delta as an evolving place.

**Propositions 1 and 68 Grants**
The Commission will again assist the Conservancy in evaluating its Proposition 1 grant proposals. New in 2020 will be the consideration of Proposition 68 projects.

**Statewide Water Reliability Consistent with Delta Values**
Assuming continued uncertainty over the proposed single tunnel plan, the Commission will work to promote statewide water solutions that reduce reliance on Delta water supplies and retain through-Delta conveyance.
REGENERATION ECONOMY

A Template for Economic Development

The Commission’s activities to advance the regional economy are guided by its Economic Sustainability Plan (ESP). Public Resources Code § 29761.5(a) requires that the Commission update the ESP every five years. The Commission has been updating the ESP chapter by chapter beginning with Agriculture and Recreation and Tourism.

Economic Sustainability Plan Update
The ESP (initially adopted in 2012) was mandated in the 2009 Delta legislation to inform the Delta Stewardship Council’s Delta Plan policies regarding the socioeconomic sustainability of the Delta region. Commission staff is completing the update of the ESP sections related to agriculture. In 2019 the Commission retained a consultant to update the ESP Recreation and Tourism chapter, beginning with a comprehensive review and synthesis of more than twenty Delta recreation-related studies and reports completed since 2012.

Socioeconomic Indicators
The UC Davis Center for Regional Change (CRC) finalized their report on Delta Socioeconomic Indicators. In close coordination with Commission staff, CRC finished the analysis of the indicators measuring economic, political, and social well-being including, but not limited to, the agricultural economy, labor market, and job quality measures, economic security, and education and employment security. Along with the final report, staff and a consultant created an infographic brochure that provides a cross-section of data in a readily understandable format to share with Delta stakeholders and policymakers.

Delta Lodging Workshop
In May, Commission staff presented a Lodging Workshop in Walnut Grove to provide information about alternative lodging opportunities in the Delta. Approximately 25 participants heard perspectives from current lodging providers, County and UC Extension planners, as well as general marketing guidance and financing.
THE YEAR AHEAD

Economic Sustainability Plan Update
The ESP update will continue in 2020. Completion and distribution of the Agriculture section is anticipated. The Recreation and Tourism chapter update is fully underway, with plans for five Delta focus groups to convene in the first quarter to gain perspective on current and emerging recreation trends, improve understanding of economic issues facing marinas, and initiate connections to underserved and disadvantaged Delta recreators.

Agritourism Research
Commission staff completed infographics presenting the data from this report which will be published and distributed in 2020.
Hundreds of Miles of Waterways

Hundreds of miles of waterways...and so much more. Recreation in the Delta is a cornerstone of the regional economy and will play an important role in the Delta’s future, and as such is an important priority for Commission actions. Popular types of recreation in the Delta include motorized and non-motorized boating, wildlife viewing, and agritourism. The Great California Delta Trail (Delta Trail) brings an opportunity for additional recreation corridors in the region.

Recreation and Tourism Research
In 2019 California State University, Sacramento researchers retained by the Commission completed the report “Recreation & Tourism in the Delta: A Study of Preferences for Activities and Facilities, Information Sources and Economic Contributions of Delta Events.” The report analyzed 527 surveys collected online and in-person during 2018 at four different events around the Delta. Events included the Locke Asian-Pacific Festival, the Courtland Pear Fair, Heart of Oakley Festival, and the Rio Vista Bass Festival. The final report will be used by Commission staff and consultants developing the Economic Sustainability Plan update for the Recreation and Tourism chapter.

Great California Delta Trail
Commission staff completed the Great California Delta Trail Eastern Region Blueprint (San Joaquin, Yolo, and Sacramento counties) and entered into a contract to assist with the Great California Delta Trail Master Plan. Stakeholder Advisory and Technical Advisory Committees were reconvened to support the Plan development. New metal trail signs were procured and installed along the Clarksburg Branch Line and West Sacramento alignments of the Delta Trail.

The Delta Marketing Campaign
The Visit CA Delta website saw a 54% increase in users from the previous year. Twenty-two Delta businesses and organizations were awarded as “Best of the Delta” from the third annual survey. Commission staff continued progress towards placing “Welcome to the Delta” signs at strategic Delta locations. The Delta Marketing Task Force finalized review of the Delta Recreation Map and 6500 copies were printed. The map is designed as an informational resource to help increase awareness and tourism to the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, as outlined in the Delta Tourism Awareness 5-Year Marketing Plan.

Aquatic Invasive Species
Commission staff continued to track and report on Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) in the Delta using the electronic newsletter Delta Happenings and social media. HABs can be harmful to people and pets when they contact affected water.
THE YEAR AHEAD

The Great California Delta Trail
Commission staff will continue to partner with local governments and regional agencies to identify existing and planned trail networks to adopt into the Delta Trail. Social media platforms will be further developed to promote the trail. In coordination with a contractor, staff conduct public outreach and release the Public Review Draft Great Delta Trail Master Plan by the end of 2020.

The Delta Marketing Campaign Expansion
It is expected that 11 “Welcome to the Delta” signs will be installed by the end of the second quarter. Expansion of the Visit CA Delta website and social media platforms will also continue. The Delta Marketing Task Force, Commission, and Conservancy staff are drafting a distribution plan for the 6500 printed maps to reach target audiences.

Recreation and Tourism Research
Commission staff developed an infographic presentation of the CSU Sacramento Recreation and Tourism Report that will be published and distributed in the first quarter of 2020.
The Commission manages the newly established Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area and protects, enhances, and sustains the unique cultural values of the Delta through public education, historic preservation, tourism and recreation development, visitor amenities, and economic development activities.

Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area
The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area, long proposed in legislation by Congressman Garamendi and Senator Feinstein, was included as a provision of the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act, and signed into law on March 12. The Commission, which serves as the local coordinating entity, selected a consulting team to prepare initial work on the statutorily-mandated management plan.

1883 Clarksburg Schoolhouse
Commission staff worked with the Delta Stewardship Council, Friends of the 1883 Clarksburg Schoolhouse, and a consultant to prepare interpretive concepts as part of a larger effort to convert the former schoolhouse into a community cultural center and visitors’ center for the North Delta.

Delta Anthology
The Commission worked with partners on an anthology intended for high school and college readers as well as for those interested in learning more about the Delta’s rich culture and heritage. During 2019, Commission staff solicited manuscripts, citations, archives, and leads on materials for the project.

Delta Community Action Planning
Valley Vision completed a report for the Commission in August 2019 on improving broadband infrastructure in five legacy communities that have participated in the community action planning processes: Clarksburg, Courtland, Hood, Isleton, and Walnut Grove.

Delta Heritage Forum
Commission staff hosted the second annual Delta Heritage Forum in June 2019. The forum was a full-day event focused on efforts to preserve and tell Delta stories, opportunities for partnerships and collaboration, and networking.

Delta as Place Interagency Working Group
The Delta as Place Interagency Working Group met in January, April, July, and October. The working group, which is comprised of staff from agencies and interested members of the public, is focused on facilitating “Delta as Place” discussion and projects. The group will continue to meet in 2020.
THE YEAR AHEAD

Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area Program and Management Plan
Commission staff will be working on several initiatives as part of the new National Heritage Area, including completing agreements with the National Park Service, preparation of management plan components, outreach to State and local governments, communities, and non-profit organizations, developing a partnership program, creating a marketing strategy, and researching best practices at other National Heritage Areas.

Delta Community Design Workshop
Commission staff will be hosting a workshop on community design for the Sacramento River Delta legacy communities in mid-January 2020 and a follow-up meeting in March 2020. Staff will work with these communities on implementing the recommendations from the workshop.

Delta Heritage Forum
Commission staff will be hosting the third annual Delta Heritage Forum in late spring/early summer 2020.

Delta Anthology
Commission staff will be exploring potential funding and partnership opportunities to further develop material for the Delta Anthology project.

1883 Clarksburg Schoolhouse
Commission staff will continue to work with the Delta Stewardship Council, Friends of the 1883 Clarksburg Schoolhouse, and consultants on the development of a community cultural center and visitors’ center for the North Delta, including the compilation of oral histories.

Delta Asian And Pacific Islander Heritage Advisory Committee
Commission staff will collaborate with the Delta Asian and Pacific Islander Heritage Advisory Committee on the National Heritage Area, potential driving and walking tours, interpretive signs, and other heritage-related projects.

Interpretive Signs
Commission staff will be working with cultural organizations and communities to install interpretive signs, which will describe the cultural and historical significance of buildings and landscapes, at selected heritage sites in the Delta.
OUTREACH & EDUCATION

The Voice of the Delta

Vision 2030 prioritized the expansion of outreach within and beyond the Delta, and implementation of a communications plan to enhance knowledge of issues and activities among Delta stakeholders. With this focus, outreach activities fulfill objectives across the full range of the Strategic Themes defined in Vision 2030. Program-specific communication projects, public outreach, and events and workshops are all highlighted in their correlating themes on the previous pages.

Delta Leadership Program
The fourth cohort of the Delta Leadership Program graduated eighteen fellows at the Commission’s March meeting. During the program sessions, participants heard panels of experts discussing Delta issues such as water, public safety, legislation, agriculture, recreation, and working landscapes, and engaged in personal leadership development training and exercises. The fifth class, which convened in November, includes 19 participants.

Flood Preparedness Week
The Commission continued its partnership with California Department of Water Resources and delivered another Flood Preparedness Calendar to more than 5,000 residents in the primary zone. Commission staff developed new outreach materials in both in English and Spanish to expand reach to families in the River Delta Unified School District.

Community Involvement
The Commission continued to support the statewide waterway cleanup effort by serving as captains for five Delta sites. Commission staff helped to organize 312 volunteers who removed an estimated 4,000 pounds of trash - much of which was harmful micro-plastic. Staff sponsored five Delta families as part of Angels of the Fields, a worthy organization that brings holiday cheer to farmworker families and others in need in the Delta.

Communications
The weekly Delta Happenings email increased in reach by almost 37%. This year saw a 26% increase in Twitter impressions and a 64% increase in reach on Facebook. The website had a 74% increase in users. Commission staff wrote 20 engaging Delta-related articles for the quarterly Delta Voice newsletter. Staff released eight issues of the Delta Heritage Courier - an electronic newsletter focused on cultural heritage in the Delta and Carquinez Strait. Creating electronic documents and web content that is accessible to people with visual impairments was a high priority in 2019. Commission documents were analyzed and prioritized by staff for accessibility remediation and a new website went into development.
THE YEAR AHEAD

Delta Leadership Program
The fifth cohort of the Delta Leadership Program has 19 participants and will be working on class projects to support the Delta National Heritage Area.

New Website and Document Accessibility
Document and website accessibility will continue to be a high priority in 2020 as Commission staff remediates documents. A new website that is compliant with accessibility standards, and is mobile-friendly, will go live in early January. The new website will continue to grow as documents are remediated.
2019 MEMBERSHIP

Commissioners

Oscar Villegas, Chair
Supervisor, Yolo County

Don Nottoli, Vice Chair
Supervisor, Sacramento County

Chuck Winn
Supervisor, San Joaquin County

Diane Burgis
Supervisor, Contra Costa County

Skip Thomson
Supervisor, Solano County

Ronald Kott
Mayor, Rio Vista

Christopher Cabaldon
Mayor, City of West Sacramento

Alan Nakanishi
Councilmember, City of Lodi

George Biagi, Jr.
Representative, Central Delta Reclamation Districts

Justin van Loben Sels
Representative, North Delta Reclamation Districts

Nick Mussi
Representative, South Delta Reclamation Districts

David Kim
Secretary, California State Transportation Agency

Karen Ross
Secretary, California Department of Food and Agriculture

Wade Crowfoot
Secretary, California Natural Resources Agency

Brian Bugsch
Chief, Land Management Division, California State Lands Commission

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