



ACTION 2024

Delta Protection Commission

Annual Report



Letter from the Chair



January 16, 2025

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

Re: 2024 Annual Report of the Delta Protection
Commission

Dear Governor Newsom,

Pursuant to the provisions of Public Resources Code
Section 29780, I am proud to submit the 2024 Delta
Protection Commission Annual Report for your review.

It is our mission to support agriculture, recreation, cultural
heritage, and natural resources in the Delta. We advance
that mission by implementing our Strategic Plan (Vision
2030) while adapting to challenges and opportunities.

The Commission made great strides in 2024: It submitted
for federal approval the management plan for the
Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area,
emphasizing protection and promotion of the Delta's
vibrant culture and history; partnered with City of West
Sacramento, Yolo County, and the Yolo Transportation
District to obtain a \$1.9 million grant to extend a segment
of the Great California Delta Trail from West Sacramento to
Clarksburg; reviewed hundreds of land-use projects,
ensuring growth does not come at the expense of
agriculture and historic communities; and worked to
expand digital equity in the Delta by helping Isleton secure
broadband internet access and grant funding.

With the support of all the Commission members, it is an
honor to offer you the Delta Protection Commission 2024
Annual Report.

Sincerely,

Diane Burgis
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 15 members of the Commission include a member of the County Board of Supervisors from each of the five primary 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 Section 29780, each year the Commission submits to the Governor and the state Legislature this Annual Report, describing the progress Commission actions have made toward fulfilling the requirements of the Delta Protection Act.

2024 Actions

Land & Water

Commission staff reviewed local government and other agency agendas and public notices to identify projects that fall under the Commission’s purview, then reviewed those projects for consistency with the [Land Use and Resource Management Plan \(LURMP\)](#) and the Delta Protection Act.

As needed, Commission staff submitted comment letters to various entities on land use projects, detailed later in this report in the [Land Use Project Comment Letters section](#).

General Plans. Staff also reviewed the consistency of local general plan amendments with the Delta Protection Act, including:

- **The Contra Costa County 2045 General Plan.** Through collaboration with the Commission, the County incorporated additional policies to protect agricultural and natural resource values, levees, and resources relevant to flood protection.
- **The Rio Vista 2045 General Plan.** In the small portion of the city that lies in the Primary Zone, land uses are industrial warehouses, a municipal wastewater treatment plant, and agricultural uses such as grazing. Staff worked with the city’s planning consultant to incorporate a policy allowing continued grazing to the extent it is compatible with the other land uses.

Delta Conveyance Project. Commission staff continue to participate in activities related to the Department of Water Resources’ Delta Conveyance Project (DCP), including:

- **National Historic Preservation Act.** Continuing to consult on a draft Programmatic Agreement under Section 106 of the National Heritage Preservation Act in the DCP’s capacity as a consulting party to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). Programmatic Agreements provide a structured process to identify and resolve adverse effects on historic and cultural resources from complex multi-phased projects. Commission staff is working with Delta counties to ensure that the Programmatic Agreement meaningfully includes local governments and tribes at each step described in the agreement.
- **Geotechnical activities.** Preparing Commission [staff comments](#) on the consistency certification for 2024-2026 DCP geotechnical activities. The document certifies that geotechnical activities for the DCP are consistent with the Delta Plan adopted by the Delta Stewardship Council; the comments contend the geotechnical work will permanently disrupt agricultural processes through the

placement of permanent survey monuments. The comments also argue that the consistency certification fails to include the full scope of the covered action as required in the consistency certification process.

Delta Communities

Commission staff engaged in the following to support Delta communities:

Broadband. Worked with the City of Isleton and the Connected Capital Area Broadband Consortium manager Valley Vision to obtain a [\\$20,000 Local Government Best Practices grant](#) from the California Emerging Technologies Fund to expand digital equity in the community. Also supported the city’s [effort to bring in a new provider’s wireless tower and technology](#) that has expanded broadband service coverage, speed and quality in the area.

Post-disaster housing. Collaborated with the Delta Stewardship Council, Sacramento Coalition to End Homelessness, Department of Water Resources, University of California, Davis, and Stanford University, to produce the [“Planning for Post-Disaster Housing in Legacy Communities” Story Map](#) presented at the Science for Communities Workshop in July.

Representation. Commission staff participate on multiple task forces and committees to represent the interest of Delta communities.

The Executive Director presents regular updates on Commission activities at the Delta Stewardship Council, is a Liaison Advisor to the Delta Conservancy, and regularly attends and participates in meetings of the North, Central and South Delta water agencies.

Additional task forces and committees that Commission staff participate in include: Bay-Delta Tribal Engagement Working Group, Carquinez Strait Scenic Loop Committee, Central Valley Flood Protection Board, Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee, Delta Interagency Invasive Species Committee, the Delta Levees and Habitat Advisory Committee.

Regional Economy

Socioeconomic Indicators Report. In collaboration with the Delta Stewardship Council, staff continued work updating the Commission’s [Socioeconomic Indicators Report](#), covering the period 2016 to 2023. The report will provide a quantitative snapshot for benchmarking policy progress in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta region. Key findings will include the need to monitor increased housing pressure on agricultural lands in the

Secondary Zone; the deterioration of state highway road conditions; and the potential to develop a Delta agricultural productivity report.

Data gathered for the report also supplied data needed to update Delta Plan Performance Measure 5.9 relating to Delta Plan Chapter 5, “Protect and Enhance the Unique Cultural, Recreational, Natural Resource, and Agricultural Values of the California Delta as an Evolving Place.” Publication of the report is expected in 2025.

Recreation & Tourism

Clarksburg Branch Line Trail extension. The Commission partnered with City of West Sacramento, Yolo County, and the Yolo Transportation District to obtain a [\\$1.9 million Carbon Reduction Program grant](#) to extend a segment of the Great California Delta Trail from West Sacramento to Clarksburg.

The [Great California Delta Trail](#) is a network of trail segments built and managed by local governments, with the Delta Protection Commission acting in a coordinating role. The trail will form a continuous regional recreation corridor extending around the Delta, including the shorelines of five Delta counties, and linking trail systems from Sacramento to the San Francisco Bay.

The Clarksburg Branch Line Trail extension is proposed as a 6.4-mile, Class I multi-use trail with buried fiber optic conduit along the former Sierra Northern Short Line Rail alignment. The project is intended to reduce transportation-related carbon emissions and potentially connect the Clarksburg community to West Sacramento and beyond.

Project outreach, reviews, engineering, and design will occur beginning in 2025, with construction, if the project is approved, beginning in 2028.

Event promotion. Commission staff continued to promote Delta community events in the *Delta Happenings* and *Delta Heritage Courier* newsletters.

Heritage

The Commission is the local coordinating entity for the [Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area \(NHA\)](#), which was established by Congress in 2019.

National Heritage Area Management Plan. Commission staff completed its first major task on development of the NHA in March with submission of a [management plan](#) for review by the Secretary of Interior. The plan was developed over several years with the NHA Management Plan Advisory Committee in consultation with Delta communities; heritage professionals; and federal, tribal, state, and local governments. Outreach in 2024 included

private meetings with tribal representatives, three public meetings, and presentations to the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors and community organizations.

The plan received letters of commitment and support from:

- **U.S. representatives:** Ami Bera, Mark DeSaulnier, John Garamendi, Josh Harder, Doris Matsui, and Mike Thompson
- **National Park Service units:** John Muir National Historic Site, Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial
- **California state agencies:** Delta Stewardship Council; Department of Fish and Wildlife; Natural Resources Agency; Department of Parks and Recreation, Office of Historic Preservation; Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy; State Lands Commission; and State Water Resources Control Board, Office of the Delta Watermaster
- **Counties:** Contra Costa, Sacramento, San Joaquin, and Yolo; Delta Counties Coalition
- **Cities:** Antioch, Brentwood, Oakley, and Pittsburg
- **Special Districts:** East Bay Municipal Utility District, East Bay Regional Park District, Suisun Resource Conservation District
- **Government advisory bodies:** Contra Costa County Historic Landmarks Advisory Committee
- **Universities:** California State University, Sacramento, Department of History; University of California, Davis, Center for Regional Change
- **Chambers of commerce and tourism organizations:** California Delta Chambers and Visitor's Bureau, Isleton Chamber of Commerce, Oakley Chamber of Commerce, Visit California
- **Private businesses:** American Cruise Line, Willow Ballroom
- **Cultural and historical organizations:** Antioch Historical Society; California Preservation Foundation; Delta Education Cultural Society; East Contra Costa Historical Society; Friends of the 1883 Clarksburg Schoolhouse; Locke Foundation; Locke Prior Residents, Descendants and Ascendants Association; Pittsburg Historical Society; Sierra Nevada Mountain Chautauqua
- **Community organizations:** Delta Legacy Communities, Inc; Freeport Citizens Community; Hood Community Council; RioVision; South Pocket Homeowners Association
- **Other organizations:** Asian Pacific Islander American Public Affairs, Delta Chapter; California Striped Bass Association, West Delta Chapter; Farm Bureau Delta Caucus; Marine Recreation Association; Society for California Archeology
- **Also:** Cristina Lewis

National Park Service officials reviewed the management plan, including engaging in tribal consultation, and have provided their recommendation of approval to the Secretary of the Interior.

Delta Heritage Forum. Commission staff organized the sixth annual [Delta Heritage Forum](#) for more than 80 Delta heritage professionals and aficionados on Nov. 15 at the Antioch Historical Museum. The free, full-day event included panel discussions designed to help heritage professionals, Delta storytellers, talks on Delta history topics, and a museum scavenger hunt.

Welcome to the Delta National Heritage Area Signs. Signs to mark representative Delta boundary locations as identified by the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy’s Delta Sign Plan have been installed by Caltrans District 10 in San Joaquin County. The DPC developed the welcome signs in collaboration with the Conservancy and the Delta marketing task force, which have also been installed in Sacramento and Yolo counties.

Science Support

Commission staff activities supporting new research projects benefiting Delta resources included:

- Letters supporting research grants:
 - Evaluating “alternate wetting and drying” rice cultivation for its potential to reduce consumptive water use and methane emissions, thereby further improving the environmental benefits of rice cultivation in the Delta.
 - Identifying links between Harmful Algal Blooms and human health, a pressing issue facing residents and communities that depend on Delta waterways.
- Participation in the Just Transitions in the Delta advisory committee considering various adaptation strategies in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta under conditions of drought, salinity and sea-level rise.

Communications

Commission staff expanded or improved communications with:

Feature articles. Commission staff began publishing [feature articles](#) on the website and sharing them through newsletters and social media to increase public understanding of the Delta as a place with a distinct history and a culture worth preserving. News outlets including Maven’s Notebook and the Rio Vista Beacon have republished articles, furthering the Commission’s stakeholder engagement and reach into rural communities.

Homepage redesign. The Commission’s updated homepage offers:

- *Clarity* – a concise [description of the DPC’s major areas of responsibility](#).

- *Context* – an explanation of [the Delta’s geography, governance, culture, and natural resources](#).
- *Transparency* – the [meeting calendar and materials, as soon as they are available, for the entire year](#) for the Commission and its committees.

Web-based forms. Commission staff converted to web-based forms for all applications, registrations, and feedback, increasing accessibility to DPC programs. Unlike digital documents, these forms are easily completed on mobile devices, the dominant form of internet access for many Delta residents.

Leadership & Development

Organizational assessment. Commission staff engaged an organizational assessment consultant to identify opportunities for improvement and program expansion. The assessment made 17 recommendations, of which seven are in process, including a guide to help members of the Commission’s public bodies understand their roles and responsibilities. The remaining items will be prioritized and assigned to Commission staff for completion in the coming years.

NHA Advisory Committee. The Commission replaced the National Heritage Area Management Plan Advisory Committee, which oversaw development of the NHA Management Plan, with a new [NHA Advisory Committee](#), which will oversee implementation of the plan. The committee, which now includes two members of the Commission, began meeting in October.

Delta Protection Advisory Committee. The Commission filled two new seats on the Delta Protection Advisory Committee: one [tribal seat](#) and one [additional general public seat](#). In addition, the Commission named the first general public seat the [Gerry Goodie Memorial Seat](#), to commemorate a committee member who passed away in early 2024.

Delta Leadership Program. In cooperation with the Delta Leadership Foundation, Commission staff operated the [Delta Leadership Program](#) for the ninth year. Fourteen people completed the program, which is designed to identify and cultivate regional leaders. Subsequently, one 2024 graduate was appointed to both the Delta Protection Advisory Committee and the NHA Advisory Committee, and another was a moderator in the 2024 Delta Heritage Forum. The 2025 class of 19 participants was selected in December, and the program was scheduled to begin Jan. 10.

Land Use Project Comment Letters

Multiple Counties

Long-Term Operation of the State Water Project and the State Water Project Operations and Maintenance Habitat Conservation Plan

Commission staff submitted comments July 19 on the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Long-Term Operations of the State Water Project and the Notice of Preparation for the Habitat Conservation Plan for Maintenance of the State Water Project, prepared by California Department of Water Resources.

Zone: Primary Zone and Secondary Zone

Comments: The [letter](#) noted that better substantiation may be required to support the conclusion that impacts on aquatic species would be less than significant. This is in light of federal listing of longfin smelt as endangered and the state listing of white sturgeon as a candidate for threatened status.

The comments also noted that the State Water Project operations and habitat conservation plans to support mitigation for maintenance activities appear so intertwined that they may better be analyzed as a single project.

Project Size: Indeterminate – the projects will unfold over many years. Longterm operations of the State Water Project will be largely limited to the footprint of existing facilities. The acreage of the Habitat Conservation Plan will depend on the number and scope of future conservation actions.

Farmland Conversion: Indeterminate – conservation actions under the Habitat Conservation Plan may convert farmland, but the total quantities are unknown at this time.

Contra Costa County

Contra Costa General Plan Update with the Contra Costa County 2045 General Plan

Commission staff submitted a [comment letter](#) April 8 regarding both the General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and the General Plan policies themselves. Through collaboration with the County, additional policies were incorporated into the final General Plan to protect agricultural and natural resource values, levees, and resources relevant to flood protection.

Zone: Primary Zone and Secondary Zone

Comments: Initial comments focused on inconsistencies in the analysis in the EIR and the potential for agricultural land conversion.

Project Size: Contra Costa County (approximately 800 square miles)

Farmland Conversion: Farmland conversion in the Primary Zone that could occur as a direct result of the General Plan was minimized by minor policy changes and clarifications.

Ironhouse Sanitary District, Giant Garter Snake Mitigation Bank

Ironhouse Sanitary District is a municipal agency within Contra Costa County that manages land on Jersey Island in the Delta Primary Zone. The District prepared an initial study pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) considering an application to create a giant garter snake mitigation bank on Jersey Island. The bank would consist of a landscape of sinuous channels that create aquatic habitat for giant garter snake, a special-status species. Upland basking habitat would also be created by retaining upland berms. The banking agency, Mitigation Investment Holdings, would then sell credit to entities needing mitigation to offset regulated impacts to the species. The existing landscape currently contains grazing land.

Zone: Primary Zone

Comments: Commission staff submitted a [comment letter](#) Nov. 13 flagging the issue of agricultural land loss. The letter explained that even though the land may not be a category of farmland identified in the Appendix G checklist of thresholds for CEQA analysis, conversion of that land may nonetheless contribute to a cumulatively significant problem of agricultural land loss. The letter closed by encouraging the District to adopt mitigation committing to ongoing grazing in the upland areas if the bank is created.

Project size: 189 acres

Farmland conversion: Potentially 189 acres of grazing land (potential conversion to habitat with no grazing).

Sacramento County

Twin Cities Greenwaste Composting Facility

The project consists of an application to Sacramento County for entitlements for a processing facility for municipal green waste, which must be diverted from urban sources under a new law. The proposed facility, which would convert green waste into compost, would be inside the boundary of Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.

Zone: Primary Zone

Comments: Commission staff submitted comment letters on [March 4](#) and [June 7](#).

Because the facility is not oriented toward agriculture and would convert farmland in the Primary Zone, it conflicts with the Land Use and Resource Management Plan (LURMP). The second comment letter clarified that Commission staff do not agree with the applicant's analysis that the project is consistent with the LURMP.

Project Size: 39.4 acres

Farmland Conversion: 39.4 acres of grazing land

Solano County

Cache Slough Mitigation Bank Project

Solano County and Westervelt Ecological Services propose to establish an approximately 350-acre mitigation bank. The project would re-establish approximately 34 acres of upland habitat and 316 acres of waters including wetlands, in or adjacent to the Sacramento River.

The mitigation bank proposes to offer 212 tidal, freshwater wetland credits that would include dual species credits for Delta smelt, North American green sturgeon, California Central Valley steelhead, Chinook salmon (Central Valley spring-run and Sacramento River winter-run), and giant garter snake; and 104 credits of floodplain, riparian credits that include dual species credits for California Central Valley steelhead, Chinook salmon (Central Valley spring-run and Sacramento River winter-run) and giant garter snake.

Zone: Primary Zone

Comments: Commission staff submitted [comments](#) Aug. 21 encouraging Solano County to adopt a suitable approach to offsetting conversion of agricultural land (i.e., mitigation), given the important of agricultural land to the Delta economy.

Project Size: 370 acres

Farmland Conversion: 370 acres of agricultural land (grazing).

Yolo County

Tide's End Multi-benefit Project

The proposed project would provide up to approximately 450 acres of tidal marsh and tidal channels; 630 acres of floodplain habitat; and 1,132 acres of managed floodplain and associated infrastructure, including managed seasonal wetlands for waterfowl,

agricultural fields, irrigation supply channels, and associated berm and road infrastructure. The restored mix of tidal, floodplain, and managed habitats would improve habitat for listed species, including Delta smelt and steelhead, contributing to the aquatic fish habitat.

Zone: Primary Zone

Comments: The [comments](#) focused on the conversion of agricultural land and recommended mitigation by preserving agricultural land at a high ratio (i.e., preserving an equal or greater acreage of agricultural land than that converted).

Project Size: 2,212 acres

Farmland Conversion: Approximately 2,212 acres of agricultural and vacant land.

2024 Membership

Commissioners

Diane Burgis, Chair

Supervisor, Contra Costa County

John Vasquez, Vice Chair

Supervisor, Solano County

Oscar Villegas

Supervisor, Yolo County

Patrick Hume

Supervisor, Sacramento County

Tom Patti

Supervisor, San Joaquin County

Anissa Williams

Mayor, City of Oakley

Paul Steele

Councilmember, City of Isleton

Alan Nakanishi

Councilmember, City of Lodi

James Paroli

Representative, Central Delta Reclamation Districts

Tom Slater

Representative, North Delta Reclamation Districts

Vacant

Representative, South Delta Reclamation Districts

Toks Omishakin

Secretary, California State Transportation Agency

Karen Ross

Secretary, California Department of Food and Agriculture

Wade Crowfoot

Secretary, California Natural Resources Agency

Jennifer Lucchesi

Executive Officer, California State Lands Commission

Ex Officio Members

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California State Senate

Honorable Carlos Villapudua

California State Assembly

Commission Staff

Bruce Blodgett

Executive Director

Debra Waltman

Assistant Executive Director

Virginia Gardiner

Program Manager

Blake Roberts

Program Manager

Mike Aviña

Senior Environmental Planner

Holly Heyser

Information Officer

Heather McClure

Administrative Analyst



Delta Protection Commission

2101 Stone Blvd., Suite 200
West Sacramento, CA 95691

www.delta.ca.gov